The Complete

ACTED PLAY

From Script to Final Curtain

By

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PREFACE

THIS book is written out of an experience of a quarter of a century in the amateur theater. During these years the writers have, together, directed more than a hundred and fifty plays, designed, constructed, painted, and lighted three hundred sets, designed and made nearly one thousand costumes, and played over a hundred parts. These figures are not set down to impress the reader but to report that all this experience has provided unlimited opportunities for making many kinds of mistakes. Many mistakes, have, therefore, been committed, and through them better ways of doing things have been discovered. There were no books on play production in 1916 when we began; we tried out one idea, and if it did not work, we tried another.

No one would believe us for a moment if we declared that experience alone wrote this book. For twenty years helpful books on the amateur theater have been appearing. We have read these books and have been wiser in the theory and practice of play production from having read them. The reader's attention will be called to a number of books on the various phases of production throughout the following pages.

This book is not for the experienced theater worker but for the beginner. It seeks to set down practices for production rather than theories, though a number of theories are touched lightly; it further seeks to be a complete handbook for all beginning theater workers, in whatever field of production they are engaged. Some points, of course, have been omitted; everything could not be included if the book were twice its length; but our hope is that in each field enough information is given for successful practice.

Lastly, the experienced director will not agree with some of our ways of doing things; this is well and as it should be. Even an occasional beginner may question some of our assertions; and

this, too, is as it should be. After he has tested some of the ways herein suggested, he may discover ways for himself which will give his work more authenticity and originality.

Allen Crafton
Jessica Royer

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A NEW THEATER

ON ANY weekday night from October to June, in any state from
Delaware to California, in any community ranging in population
from the eight millions of New York City to a sparsely settled
township in the west, adults and young people may be seen going
in the direction of the local high school or college; they park their
cars and enter one of the buildings; they make their way to an
auditorium which closely or remotely resembles the auditorium of
a professional theater; they find their seats, read their programs,
and wait for a play to begin; sometime between eight and nine
o'clock the curtain rises and a play does begin; and in many cases
it is a reasonably good play, well enough presented to give the
audience something of the experience of the professional theater.

For us today there is nothing unusual, nothing to warrant com-
ment in this oft-repeated event; but if an old theatrical trouper
of 1910 could come back and take a look at these thousands of
school theaters, and could see the hundreds of thousands of spec-
tators crowding into them, he would probably blink his eyes, stare
again, and declare dramatically, "I don't believe it, for it cannot
be!"

Our world of the theater has changed. In 1912 an amateur
theater movement began to take root in America, a movement at
first only casually connected with education. In 1917 war halted
much of this budding dramatic effort. In 1919 the effort was re-
newed, and four types of theater began to develop: the commu-
nity theater, the art theater, the church theater, and the school
theater. After 1919 the professional theater fell upon hard days,

it lost ground to the movies, road companies all but ceased to be, and the professional theater remained a living theater in only a few large cities. After 1919 the school theater developed rapidly and started to work itself into the lead among amateur theaters. This school drama was at first reluctantly tolerated by the educational authorities, then became integrated in the educational curriculum. Makeshift theaters were devised and these in turn were replaced by well-equipped stages and comfortable auditoriums. Play coaches, who were usually English teachers with a leaning towards literary drama, gave place to directors who were more or less adequately trained in the craft and art of play production.

So today a new theater flourishes in the land, a type of theater which could never have entered the imagination of the professional theater worker of 1910. It is not yet a great theater, but already in many localities it is doing an admirable job of putting on a play. It is teaching young people to imagine, to touch meanings, to sense beauty. It has spread from coast to coast; and, as suggested, every night, near eight o'clock, its auditoriums begin to fill with all kinds of people who, since the disappearance of the traveling professional company, have looked to it, more and more often, for their theatrical fare.

As this new theater, this non-commercial, amateur school theater nears the close of the first quarter century of its existence, three facts stand out: the first is that although in almost every instance there are a stage, a curtain, and an auditorium resembling in some degree those of a standard theater, yet these vary to a remarkable degree in shape, size and equipment; second, a great variety of objectives is to be found among these theaters, ranging from no conscious objective at all, through cheap and easy entertainment, up to the presentation of a worthy play as an artistic unit; and third, the equipment of the teacher-directors varies from thorough preparation to no preparation at all, from thorough knowledge of the process of play production to blissful ignorance of even the fundamentals of the process.

In brief, while the quantity of school drama is an established fact, and a rather staggering fact, the quality is decidedly variable.

Our immediate task, therefore, is the difficult one of raising the quality.

This book is not addressed to the teacher-director who has taken his master's degree in play production at some large university and who, in consequence, is capable of creating a good stage production; rather, it is for the beginner who wants to put on plays but does not know how; it is for the high school and college teacher who finds that he must produce plays but has had insufficient training and experience for his job; it is for the college student majoring in some subject other than drama who later may be called upon to direct or act in plays; and it is for the college student who desires a first course in practical theater.

The book is an elementary, not an advanced, book; it is simple rather than technical; it avoids theoretical discussion whenever possible; it makes the attempt to be complete and thoroughly practical.

With this brief explanation of purpose and content, the reader may either close the book at once, or turn to the next chapter which includes an analysis of this new theater that has grown up in our schools.

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THE THEATER IN THE SCHOOL

We may start from the premise that there is a theater in our school, whether the school be a small rural high school, a city high school, junior college, college, or university. The schools without some sort of theater are too few to demand our attention. Functionally, this theater may be a laboratory for the department of drama, may be used by the school as a whole, may operate as a part of the regular curriculum, or may be an extracurricular activity in the hands of the students. Physically, the theater may be a separate building, fully equipped, or an auditorium designed for the use of a dozen different types of public performances and inadequate for all of them, or a stage in one end of the gymnasium or field house, or no more than a large classroom with a platform in one end.

In most cases the drama department has some control over the school theater. It should have, just as the athletic field should be managed by the athletic department. It is desirable further that the public plays in this theater be given under the supervision of the drama department so that there may be a close tie between the acted play and the study of drama, so that the plays shall have better-trained actors and theater workers, so that the theater may have a conscious objective.

The Physical Theater

THE STAGE

It is no news to say that in our school theaters we find large stages and small ones, deep stages and shallow ones, high stages

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and low ones, well-equipped stages and those with no equipment, stages with a fly loft above and those with a solid ceiling only twelve feet from the stage floor. The unalterable fact is that the director must accept the stage he has and do the best he can with it. However, in order to do his best, he should learn some of the advantages and disadvantages, from a production standpoint, of his particular stage.

A large stage has certain advantages: it provides room for scenery handling and property storage, and permits experimentation with wagon, jackknife, and revolving stages. On the other hand, it is difficult to set an intimate play on a large stage because spaces and furniture appear out of proportion to the size of the setting the stage demands; also, actors have trouble in "filling" a large stage. Something should be done in this case to narrow the width of the proscenium opening by means of an inner proscenium. When the proscenium is narrowed, the sight lines must be considered: people sitting at the sides of the auditorium, near the front, must not be deprived of a view of the action.

A small stage has the disadvantage of a lack of working and storage space; otherwise, for most plays, it is preferable to a large one. Scenery is less expensive to build, actors are able to fill it more easily, there is little sight-line difficulty. A small stage calls for simplified scenery, elimination of detail, a minimum of furniture; overcrowding the stage with action or properties should be avoided.

A deep stage presents no problems and is always accepted with pleasure by the director.

A wide shallow stage is a trouble-maker; it is almost bound to give a distorted effect to the interior set placed upon it. For the sake of the unity and coherence of his production, the director should strive to plan his whole design—entrances, windows, furniture, action—nearer the center of the stage and should use extreme right and left as little as possible.

A high stage presents another problem. On such a stage, as the actors move upstage from the footlights, their feet, ankles, and knees are cut off from the sight of the spectators down front.

Therefore, the action should be played farther downstage than usual, even though the actors may appear unusually tall. Rising stage levels, upstage, help the spectators to see the action on a high stage.

A low stage offers its different and particular problems. One problem is that the light patterns thrown on the floor by the spotlights are now clearly visible and may become distracting to the audience. Another problem is that a low stage disturbs the sense of aesthetic distance in the theater, it tends to destroy the detached attitude an audience feels when the level is high and the play is set apart from the audience.

An interesting point which a director should remember concerns the reaction of the audience when different types of plays are presented on a low stage.

Plays may be called representational or presentational according to whether they represent an action and play it *for* an audience or whether they are unrealistic and present an action both *for* and *to* an audience. An Ibsen play or one by Shaw or Maxwell Anderson is representational and more or less realistic; a play by Shakespeare, some of the nineteenth-century melodramas, and most musical comedies are presentational and unrealistic.

A representational play is more difficult to get across from a low stage because the detached attitude is weakened; the actors should work upstage and should seem to ignore the audience more than when they are working on a high stage. A presentational play is easier, for in this play the action does not need to be set apart so definitely from the auditorium, and the actors can, naturally, play more *to* the audience.

To return to our list of stages, a stage with a fly loft and gridiron is a godsend and facilitates production in a number of ways. A stage with a ceiling twelve feet above the floor is a constant handicap in staging. About all one can do is paint it a neutral color, keep it unencumbered by borders or drapes, and keep the light off it.

Even though the teacher-director cannot remake the stage he is given to work on, he ought to be familiar with the most prac-

tical dimensions of a stage, for—who knows?—a theater may some day be planned for the new union or music building and he may be asked some questions.

The height of the stage floor should be three and a half to four feet above the level of the auditorium floor. Some contractors reason that, since the plans call for an auditorium floor with no rise, the stage should be higher in order that the spectators may see better. It does not work out this way. All that the spectator gets is, literally, a pain in the neck from tilting his head at an uncomfortable angle.

The width of the proscenium opening should be between twenty-four feet and thirty-two feet. A stage opening narrower than twenty-four feet becomes too cramped; one more than thirty-two feet in width becomes too wide for interior sets.

The opening may be as high as eighteen feet, but never lower than twelve feet.

The grand drape or teaser may be dropped to lower the opening to any desired height, but solid masonry extending across the stage at a height of ten feet cannot be raised.

On either side of the proscenium opening, fifteen feet of unencumbered space is desirable. This gives sufficient room for scenery and property storage and for the operation of wagon or jackknife stages.

A depth of twenty-five feet is sufficient. Most of the action takes place in the fifteen or sixteen feet just upstage from the footlights. This leaves approximately ten feet for ground rows, back drop, and a passageway against the back wall from one side of the stage to the other.

The gridiron should be at least forty feet above the stage floor; fifty feet is better, for we need enough height to fly and conceal from sight a drop eighteen feet high.

THE AUDITORIUM

As with the stage, we often take whatever auditorium the architect or carpenter has given us and are thankful that it is no worse. We can, however, circumvent some of the shortcomings

of our stage; we can do little or nothing about our auditorium.
Our worst difficulty is the auditorium which has a level floor.
Perhaps the architect had to make the room serve for basket ball
and dancing as well as for stage exhibitions, so what could he do
but construct a level floor? And what can we do but deplore the
fact?

A second difficulty is a wide auditorium in which all the seats
do not squarely front the stage, thus making it necessary for some

GOOD
SIGHT LINES

BAD SIGHT LINES—*IN
WHICH THE DIRECTOR MUST
PULL HIS BUSINESS WELL
IN TOWARDS CENTER*

THE QUESTION OF SIGHT LINES
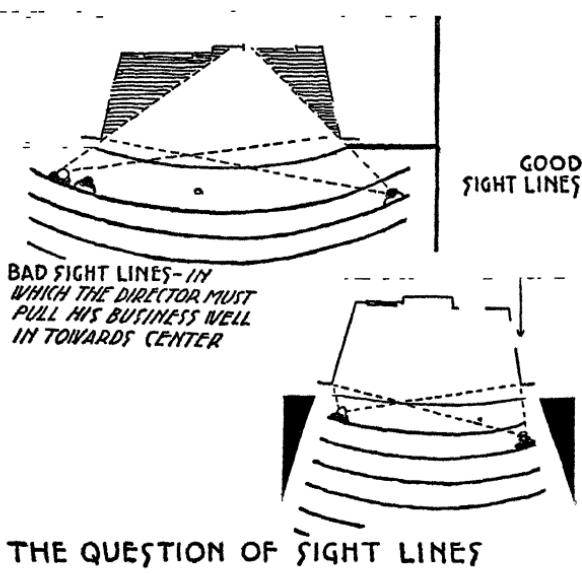
of the audience to perch on the edges of their seats with their heads
turned sideways in order to see the play. A different arrangement
of the seating might have helped this situation a little; a rear-
rangement might still help it, though perhaps not much.

Other common annoyances are uncomfortable seats and the
rows of seats placed too close together.

Although a director may have no choice but to present his plays
to an audience seated in an auditorium which is uncomfortable
and inadequate, he should know the requirements of a good audi-
torium. The auditorium concerns the audience; every audience

wishes to see and hear without effort and to be comfortably seated.

In order that every spectator may see the action on the stage, the auditorium should be rectangular in shape, should converge towards the stage (no seats down front at the sides), and should have an inclined floor with a pitch of a little more than one inch to the foot. Another aid to vision is accomplished by staggering the seats so that instead of looking directly over the head or around the shoulder of the person in front, the spectator looks through the space between two persons.

If all members of an audience are to hear clearly, the auditorium must be designed with a scientific consideration for acoustical properties. Good acoustics were once a matter of accident; they are now a matter of applying known principles of science in the construction of the theater.

The third consideration is the comfort of the audience. A comfortable theater chair often costs no more than one which is uncomfortable. Leg room is also important. The rows of seats should be spaced no nearer than thirty-six inches from the back of one seat to the back of the seat just behind it.

And what of the seating capacity of the auditorium? Tastes and experiences vary and we cannot be definite in our answer. Certainly a capacity of only two or three hundred raises production expenses and increases royalty costs in proportion to income, and a capacity of over a thousand makes projection difficult and places a number of spectators at too great a distance from the stage. A theater seating from five to eight hundred would probably be accepted by the majority of directors as most satisfactory.

Objectives

Our school theaters offer great variety in physical equipment, size, and arrangement, and we as individuals can do very little to change the situation. Our theaters also offer variety in aims and objectives, and in this case something can be done.

Why do schools give plays? Some schools give them because plays have been given in years past and the present generation is

only carrying on a tradition. This is a very poor reason for dramatic production. It embraces no definite objective, and promotes neither growth nor progress.

Some schools produce plays for the benefit of the students who are studying stagecraft and acting. The theater is a laboratory and the students are the material for the experiment. If the experiment is successful, what may the student participants be expected to gain? They may gain (though we must not be too optimistic about the results of such experiments) a habit of better speech, a knowledge of the value of cooperation, a respect for design, a development in personality, training in poise, bodily control, and assurance. It has been demonstrated adequately that the acted play can bring about these results in its participants.

Beyond these things, under a sensitive, intelligent teacher-director whose vision of the theater includes its magic and its magnitude, the student participant may be rewarded in finer if less tangible ways. The theater may reveal to the student a great deal about beauty and its creation, about wonder, about emotion; and these things are good to know and realize. The theater may open the door of the imagination; and an imagination fully awakened and alive is held by some to be the finest product we can hope for in education.

An objective which seeks to benefit the student participant in these ways should justify the production of plays in our schools. Yet, even though the experiment be successful, even though the student's imagination be awakened, he may still be a failure as an actor. And somebody has to pay for the laboratory experiment which, in this instance, is the cost of the production. This somebody is usually the audience. Therefore, a teacher-director, choosing this objective must ask and answer for himself such questions as the following:

I will have an audience of three hundred people at this play, and I will have a cast of twelve students. Some of these students will interpret their parts badly, the presentation may not give the audience very much, but my cast will probably learn a great deal. Now, ought I to place this learning and development of my

twelve actors above a consideration for the theater experience of my audience? Is a realization of the value of cooperation gained by a few students of greater or less importance than giving my audience the theater experience which the author has planned for them in this play? Which should be of primary importance in our production: giving something to our audience or doing something for our actors?

These are questions which the teacher-director should answer honestly before he uses his theater as a laboratory and asks his public to pay for it. Many have been able to decide in favor of the students; many others have not.

Some schools use the acted play as a means to raise money and to get other organizations out of debt. We need books for the library: how shall we raise the money? We'll have the drama department put on a play. The basket ball team has a deficit: how shall we make it up? We'll have the drama department put on a play. The band fund is low and we need two tenor saxophones: what can we do? We'll have the drama department put on a play. This is a familiar story to play directors.

Such a request (it is often a command) is both a compliment and an insult. It is a compliment in that it implies that the acted play is still a money-making business, that people will still go to a play and pay to do so. It is an insult in that the play is not permitted to be given for its own sake and its own values, that its labor is looked upon as slave labor, since the profits are turned over to the band fund, while it goes about in the rags of its own inadequate funds and equipment. We may be partly to blame for this attitude. We may not have justified to educational authorities the study of drama and the production of plays. If we have not, we must first convince ourselves that the school theater has within itself sufficient value and strength for its own justification.

We can begin our crusade by protesting against the unjust exploitation of the school theater. If money is needed, why always pick on the drama department? Putting on a play requires weeks of hard work. If money is the goal, why go to all this work for fifty or a hundred dollars? Why not hold a rummage sale or an

ice cream social or a turkey raffle or a dance? Surely there are simpler and easier ways of making a few dollars than putting on a play.

Another objective is the production of plays for the entertainment of the public. In order to accept this objective, we reason as follows: The theater gives us escape, exaltation, education, emotional experience. The professional theater has passed us by. We must try to take its place. A large percentage of students have never seen a first-rate play adequately produced. We have an obligation to these students as well as to our entire local public. We will choose good but understandable plays; we will select the very best actors available; we will build as fine a production as we can, utilizing all we know of good showmanship, because we want our audience to have as complete a theater experience as we are capable of giving them.

This objective shifts the emphasis from the student participants to the audience. Before we accept this objective, we have to convince ourselves that a play for the audience is the primary object and that our student actors will be learning more of real theater, will be receiving more of personal benefit when the play is given, not primarily for themselves, but for an audience.

Still other objectives are to be found in our schools. For example, there is the acted play which is used as a socializing force, and there is the vulgar objective of working up plays in order to win prizes in contests. Our fundamental point is made if there is a realization that a clear-cut objective is essential. It is the teacher-director's obligation to choose one which is worthy both from the standpoint of education and from that of the program of drama; and having chosen his objective, he should work steadily towards it.

Finances

When we come to the question of finances and the school play, we reach one point upon which there is uniformity: the production budget is always small. Many high school directors are asked to produce a play on a budget of ten dollars. Of course, it is always

expected that the director will take in more than this amount at the door. It is expected that he will clear at least twenty-five dollars so that the school can buy a plaster cast to set on a pedestal in the first-floor hall. Thus Peter is robbed to pay Paul, for the art of the theater suffers in order that the art of sculptors shall be advanced.

Fortunately, this extreme situation is slowly disappearing; it represents a circumstance which is no longer typical. Most schools produce from two to six plays each year, and the producers are neither limited to a ten dollar budget nor do they have to send students out to beg their schoolmates and friends to buy tickets for each individual play.

There are various ways in which a season of school drama may be financed. In some large schools the theater is looked upon as a necessary laboratory, in which case it is subsidized. There is a sum of money for theater maintenance and a fund to take care of production costs and experimentation which, therefore, do not have to be paid for through ticket sales. This is excellent for experimentation and research, but it is not good training for the director or student who will have to go out and make his theater pay its own way.

There is, of course, a certain amount of subsidization in any school theater: the producers pay no rent, no light and heat bills, no upkeep; and their salaries are paid them by the school. In this respect, they are more fortunate than the producers in community and little theaters.

In some schools a season ticket is sold: the ticket, admitting to all plays, costs the purchaser from twenty-five to fifty cents a play. This is a better plan than the one of selling tickets for each individual play.

Let us assume that four plays are to be given; that season tickets sell for one dollar (twenty-five cents per play); that one hundred and fifty are sold to students and fifty to townspeople. Such an inexpensive ticket and modest sale ought to be possible even in a small high school. This gives us a budget of fifty dollars for each production which, though meager, still makes possible the pro-

duction of four plays, one or perhaps two of which may be royalty plays.

In many places, both among high schools and colleges, an activity fee is collected from each student at the beginning of the school term. Payment of this fee entitles the student to a number of tickets, each of which is good for admission to certain events during the year: to dances, concerts, football games, plays. The total fee collected is prorated among the several activities, the drama department receiving its share.

This is an excellent system if the fees provide the director with sufficient funds for the production of his plays, and they usually do. With this system he does not have to worry so much about his audience; he knows he has an audience, of whom it will consist, and he can predict fairly closely its size. More than this, he knows how much money he will be permitted to spend throughout the season, and he can select and budget his plays in accordance with this money. The activity fee system is highly recommended.

Although the work of the business manager and the handling of the budget will be taken up in a later chapter, it may not be out of place here to set down several budgets for plays given in schools in the Mississippi Valley. Their most striking feature is their wide range.

Budget for a three-act non-royalty play in a small high school, one performance:

Royalty	0
Costumes (one was made, the material and work donated)	0
Make-up	$ 1.00
Draying (hauling of furniture and props) ...	1.50
Playbooks	.75
Typing (done by the typewriting class)	0
Publicity (ten handmade posters)	1.25
Scenery (no construction, some painting)	5.10
Tickets	2.00
Programs	2.00
Total production expense	$13.60

Budget for a three-act royalty play in a high school in a town of fifteen thousand, one performance:

Royalty	$15.00
Costumes (purchase of material, cleaning) ...	5.30
Make-up	1.00
Scenery (a set made over, painted)	30.00
Publicity (window cards)	3.75
Tickets, programs	6.00
Playbooks	4.50
Incidentals	2.00
Total production expense	$67.55

Budget for a three-act play in a college, three performances:

Royalty	$ 65.00
Playbooks	2.00
Typing	7.00
Costumes (costumes made, wigs rented) ...	51.00
Scenery (drapes used, set pieces constructed) .	10.00
Publicity and advertising	23.50
Tickets and programs	18.00
Draying	3.00
Music (a three-piece orchestra, three nights) .	18.00
Incidental props	4.30
Total production expense	$201.80

Budget for a three-act play at a university, four performances:

Royalty	$125.00
Costumes (rental and express)	132.00
Playbooks	7.50
Scenery	22.00
Revolving stage (half the cost)	37.00
Publicity and advertising	31.00
Tickets and programs	23.00
Ticket seller	12.00
Gelatin sheets	4.70
Stage help	11.00
Incidentals	10.00
Total production expense	$415.20

Acting Material

Another point of uniformity in our school theaters is found in the acting material. Nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand of our plays are acted by young men and women from sixteen to twenty-two years of age who are untrained in acting (save for one or more school courses), who are inexperienced in acting (except for the one or several parts they have played for from one to four performances on the school stages), and who are generally carrying a full schedule of school work and engaging in other activities which they are rehearsing and acting in the play.

It is therefore apparent that this link in production which should be one of the strongest becomes, through natural circumstances, one of the weakest. This is nobody's fault and nothing much can be done about it. Yet it does present a problem. Consider for a moment that it takes years to learn to act; that in former times a beginning actor played dozens, even hundreds of parts in a stock company, then joined a road company, and finally was ready for a part in a Chicago or New York theater; and during this training period he was working at nothing but acting for six, perhaps seven, days of each week. Then consider the school situation: the difficult job of acting, of interpreting through voice and body an emotionalized, highly individualized character who fits into the larger unit of the play, must be entrusted to untrained, inexperienced young people who can devote to acting only a few hours each evening after the day's work has been finished.

The marvel is not that our school plays are so badly acted; the wonder is that they are ever acted sufficiently well to give our audiences the experience which the author had in mind.

Operation

In order to complete our picture of the school theater, one more subject needs a word: personnel and policy in the process of production. Once more we discover a point of uniformity: in most

school theaters, whether large or small, and wherever located, there is one person, a director, in charge of production.

We accept this director as though he had always been; but in former years students often put on plays without a director, the actors ascribing to themselves each stage movement and interpretation, and working as a committee on the simple problems of scenery, properties, and lighting; or at other times the task was divided, students and teachers taking over separate tasks: one play selection, one casting, one rehearsals, one costuming, and each working independently of the others. But as the acted play became more and more a composite of voice, movement, line, color, light, scenery, and other elements, it became increasingly necessary that one mind and imagination should control the various elements and mold them into something resembling a unit. So the teacher-director came into being, was granted authority, and has become an accepted figure.

In small schools where production is simple, the teacher-director often has charge of and responsibility for everything. He selects and casts the play, conducts rehearsals, arranges (even builds and paints) the scenery, works out the lighting and perhaps operates the control board, borrows costumes, hunts up properties, and attends to the matter of publicity and printing. This theater is truly a one-man theater.

In the larger theater, either high school or college, there are both a director and technician (or stage manager) who supervise the composite work, and they are assisted by student electricians, builders, costumers, and painters.

In the large university organizations there are a half dozen creator-executives working together under a general director, assisted by student groups organized and trained in specialized work. Such a complex organization could be represented by the graph on the following page.

Two questions arise which may as well be answered here:

Should there be one director who has complete charge of the production? There should. If a play is to have unity and clear

interpretation, it needs one mind and one imagination for its re-statement on the stage. A controlling committee, except for general matters of policy, is not helpful.

Should a director always try to set up a complete staff, similar to the one suggested below? Only when such a staff will prove actually helpful in the production. Printing the names of a number of people on the program with high-sounding titles which do not honestly represent their contribution to the production is
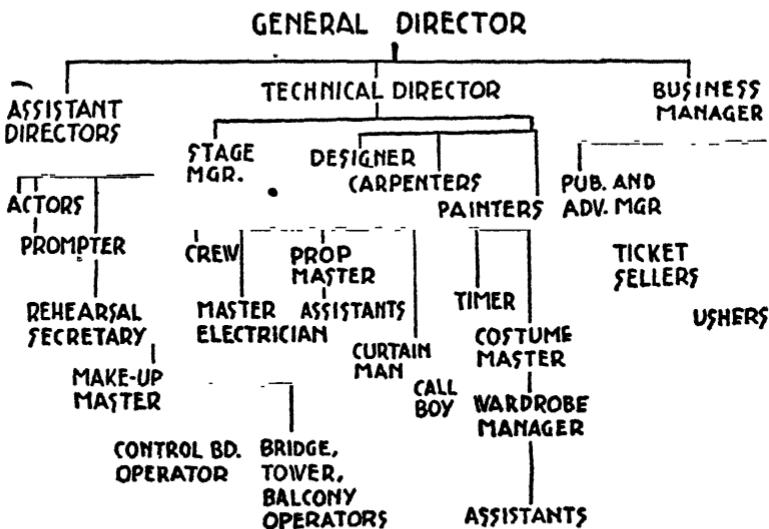
printing a lie. It gives the students recognition for doing little or nothing and inflates their ego.

An exception to this must be made when, instead of giving the audience the best production possible, the objective is to give everyone back stage a maximum of experience and responsibility, even if the production suffers. In this case the director may make a number of assignments and give important responsibilities to the student staff. This, almost certainly, will mean more work for the director rather than less, since he or a trained assistant can do the work better and in less time. Getting students to assume back-stage responsibility, getting them to make the required con-

tribution in the way it should be made, requires time and patience. The director, for the time being, becomes definitely the teacher.

This chapter should bring before us a working sketch of the American school theater. It represents a large though unorganized group, for our schools have no centralized organization for dramatics. The individual theaters disclose many outstanding differences and several important similarities. Last year hundreds of thousands of students worked in tens of thousands of these theaters, participating in thousands of plays before millions of people.

In the picture, one figure commands our attention before all others: the director; and it is with the director that our detailed study of the process of production begins.

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THE DIRECTOR: PREPARATION

OFTEN the director is the only adult connected with the production of the play, and the only person, either young or old, who has had any theatrical training and experience. He is the one who decides how the play shall be interpreted and through what means. He is the one who says "yes" or "no" to almost everything concerning the production. He controls the playbook, scenery, costumes, actors. He enforces discipline. He gives the acted play its design and its theater effectiveness. Surely it is clear that the prospective director needs training and preparation.

Preparation through Study

The prospective director should prepare himself through a liberal education in the literal meaning of that term. The more he knows of poetry, economics, history, design, psychology, and all kinds and varieties of human knowledge, the better director he will be. Ignorance of everything except the immediate world of the theater is poor preparation for directing.

He should give some time to a study of the evolution, significance, and function of the theater.

Also, he must, in some way or other, study the theories and processes of directing. He may pursue this study through the many comprehensive and helpful books on play direction; through the courses in production and direction offered in colleges and universities; or through observation of directors in schools and little theaters as they plan their productions and work with their casts. This last source of study is almost completely neglected.

Likewise, he should study stagecraft and lighting. He does not need to become a specialist in designing scenery or an expert in working out light plots; but he needs to make himself familiar with such things as scenery materials and construction, with different kinds of scenery and their advantages and disadvantages for amateur production, with the methods of holding flats together, with the kind of paint used, where to buy it, and how to apply it, with standard lighting equipment and how to use colored light, with costume design and materials.

Above all, he should study acting, for he will find a use for everything he can learn about this elusive and complex subject. He must know a great deal about voice, bodily language, imagination in acting, characterization and character creation, styles in acting, stage behavior, simple technique, and make-up; for he must be able to teach people how to act.

One purpose of this book is to familiarize the prospective director with the important factors in all phases of the acted play.

Preparation through Practice

The prospective director cannot stop with study; he must verify and enlarge his study through practice in the different fields. He must do some acting, even if he appears only in minor rôles and in classroom plays. He will then better comprehend the problems of acting, have more sympathy for and understanding of his actors, be able to explain through example what he means by a physical or vocal effect in characterization, or how he wants an emotion expressed. Many directors are good, even accomplished, actors; most directors know acting thoroughly through practice.

He should do enough work back stage to make the theories he has read in the books something more than theories. He needs to try his hand at constructing a flat, at cutting out a ground row from composition board, at mixing paint and applying it to the muslin which has been stretched on the flat, at blocking out a set according to the dimensions of his stage and the sight lines of his auditorium, at operating a control board. He may have to do

any or all of these things when he gets his first position; at the least, he will have to tell somebody else how to do some of them.

And he must get whatever experience he can in directing. If there is a course in directing, he should by all means enroll in it; if there are two courses, he should take the second one as well. If there is an opportunity to direct a church, welfare, or school group in a little play, he should seize it. When he cannot direct real people, he can construct a small stage model and some cardboard figures, and, selecting a play, work out much of his imagined production on the miniature stage. Even if a model is not available, he can still draw a floor plan on a piece of paper and work out a prompt-book for the play.

Bases for His Production

Sometime during his period of preparation, the beginning director's imagination involuntarily will begin to transfer printed plays to the stage, it will begin to restate the words of the dialogue and descriptions in the text into terms of sound and picture and movement. Now he may find that he is developing a particular way of imagining and that this way is unlike that of some other director. For instance, he may be visual minded; so the visual will form the base upon which he builds his production. He visualizes perspective, he sees spaces and groupings, he sees movements and specific lines and definite colors. The stage becomes a canvas upon which he seeks to paint an ever-changing dramatic picture.

But here is someone who does not see the production as he does. In imagining a play on a stage, this person imagines it in sound; so for him sound and music become the base. He begins to hear fast scenes and slow ones, loud speeches and soft ones, a scene mounting in vocal volume, a speech broken sharply by a dramatic pause. He is concerned with tempo, pitch, tone. For him the play is like a musical score to be interpreted by the actors and the stage.

A third person imagines in neither sound nor sight. He is interested in plot and character development, in the way the climax builds up, in the vividness or power of the dialogue; and he be-

gins to construct his imagined production along the lines of a literary work, as a piece of living literature on a stage.

And a fourth may employ theatrical effectiveness as his base. He is very sensitive to the dramatic; he believes that in the dramatic there must be something startling, different, unconventional, shocking, exaggerated. So his imagined production becomes a series of effects which thrill and delight him, and which he hopes will thrill and delight an audience.

Each base, except the last, is a good base and an adequate one for the building of a play. The last one is dangerous; it may too easily lead the director to sensationalism and mere theatrical hokum. The intelligent director, however, will not be content to build his play upon any one single base. He will accept the fact that the play *is* a literary story become active and alive, that it *is* something to be both seen and heard, and that a dramatic effect, if it is well motivated and not too obvious, *may* find a place in his production. He may have to train himself to hear a play as well as see it, or to see a play as well as hear it, but the training will increase his directional powers and resources two-fold.

Practical Information for Future Use

In preparing for his work as teacher-director, the student will find it profitable to collect a small library of information for future use.

He can, and if he is honestly interested he will, read plays and more plays, and make a list with simple notations of those which, for one reason or another, he might find suitable for production. A card index containing the following information is sufficient:

```
Name ——————"Penny Wise"
Publisher————Dramatists Play Service
Type of Play——Modern Comedy
Royalty————$25.
Comment————3 men, 4 women, 1 set
                Suitable and not too diffi-
                cult
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He can collect catalogues from play publishing houses and from extension departments which have a play rental service.

He can become acquainted with magazines which are edited for the educational theater, such as *Players Magazine* and *The Thespian*. These magazines contain pictures of amateur productions, hints on directing and staging, and lists of plays which are being presented throughout the country.

He can compile a list of firms from whom plays and stage supplies can be bought. It is surprising how few beginning directors possess even the most fundamental information about where to buy plays or simple stage necessities such as stage cleats and braces, a baby spotlight or a good scenery paint for woodwork.

So, he will find it useful to assemble a small shelf of books, catalogues, magazines, and notes. He will not be able to remember everything he will have occasion to use, and he should not try to. If he has such a shelf, he will not need to; the shelf will serve as a handy reference library of practical theater information.

When Is He Ready to Direct?

When is the student ready to begin the direction of public plays? Perhaps six months after he begins his study and practice; perhaps six years after; perhaps never.

One way in which he may test his readiness is to discover if, upon reading a play, he gets a strong emotional (not a mental) response from it; if, following this response, he begins involuntarily to see and hear the play in his imagination; if he then has the urge to translate this emotion he feels, this visualization he imagines, into tangible stage terms; if he has some confidence in his ability to make this translation; and if he finds himself in his imagination actually doing this thing.

But this is not an infallible test. Other things help determine his readiness. Other natural or acquired abilities help to tell him whether his imagined play actually can be brought to reality under his direction and whether it will meet with success or failure when presented before an audience.

There are the questions of whether he can get on with people and lead them to work with him and for him; whether he is sensitive to an audience; whether he is something of a practical psychologist; whether he has the capacity for organization and can accomplish on time the composite job which production work demands. If his answers tell him to go ahead, he is ready to begin his work in the field of production.

4

CHOICE OF PLAYS FOR PRODUCTION

Divisions of Plays

THERE are differences in emphasis, viewpoint, and structure that divide plays into different groups. An understanding of these groups is not only helpful in academic study and critical analysis, but is also helpful to the director, the actors, and the technicians in determining the choice of a play for production.

PLAYS OF SITUATION, CHARACTER, ATMOSPHERE, AND IDEA

Plays may be concerned primarily with things happening, or with people, or with the presentation of a mood, or with the exposition of an idea. According to the strong emphasis which the playwright gives to one of these elements, we have a play of situation, of character, of atmosphere, or of idea.

The *play of situation* is self-explanatory; it is one in which *what happens* is of primary importance. In such a play we are interested only mildly in the people or mood or idea, and very much in the action that is going on. What holds our attention and keeps us in suspense is the situation.

We could compile a long list of situation plays. The Roman comedy *The Menaechmi* by Plautus is one; so is Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen from Verona* and Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer.* In modern plays we think of *Charley's Aunt, The Importance of Being Earnest* (whose situations sparkle with witty dialogue), *Seven Keys to Baldpate,* even, perhaps, *The Man*

Who Came to Dinner. Among short plays there are *Dawn* by Percival Wilde, *A Night at the Inn* by Dunsany, and *Ile* by Eugene O'Neill, which is largely a situation play with some emphasis on character and idea.

The play of situation has certain advantages for the beginning director, actor, and technician. For the director it is an easy type of play to direct, and he runs but little risk with his audience, for the public likes a story, appreciates a dramatic situation more than it does a finely drawn characterization. This play is easy to act. Subtle characterization is not demanded because the characters usually are only types. While inexperienced actors can ruin a play of character or mood, they cannot destroy the play of situation. For the technician, although there is sometimes a demand for complexity in stage setting, there is usually no demand for ingenuity and subtle imagination.

In most cases the play of situation does not represent a high form of drama. It is recommended to beginners rather than to experienced theater groups. It does not forebode failure as often as do the other types.

The *play of character*, like the situation play, is just what the name implies; in it emphasis and interest are on people rather than on plot and situation.

The first thing for us to remember when we speak of a play of character is that in such a play we are not eliminating all other dramatic elements. We must have a plot with some situation and action. The difference between the function of action and plot in a play of situation and in one of character is a difference between emphases. In one, action is so emphasized that it is an end in itself; in the other, action is only a means through which character is revealed and made dramatic.

In a play of character we want to know, not what will happen, but what will happen to specific people and how it will affect them. In this play our emotions are aroused not by events but by people, and we leave the theater feeling, not that we have seen something happen, but that we have touched the lives of one or more interesting human beings.

Plays of character are easy to discover, especially in modern drama. There are Kelly's *The Show-Off*, Anderson's *Elizabeth the Queen*, Housman's *Victoria Regina*, Lady Gregory's *The Workhouse Ward*, Molnar's *Liliom*, O'Neill's *Anna Christie*, and Hellman's *Watch on the Rhine*. Yet plays of character are not lacking in the older drama. *Hamlet* is primarily a drama of character, although there is plenty of plot and situation for those who are not interested in the personal tragedy of the procrastinating Dane.

The character play presents a more difficult task to the director. Here his first problem is to learn all there is to know about the characters; then he must choose his cast carefully, selecting actors with training and imagination; finally he will have to keep at his actors day after day until they get under the skins and into the lives of the characters they are creating. The task of the director suggests the heavier requirements made on the actor by such a play. It demands acting ability, some maturity, a sensitiveness for character, and perseverance. Because the appeal of this play is to the more mature, often to the more intellectual, a greater demand is also made on the audience. So from various standpoints the production of the character play is a higher and harder task than the production of the situation play.

A third type of play that results from the playwright's selection and emphasis is the *play of atmosphere*. While the long play of atmosphere is found only rarely, the one-act play occasionally has atmosphere as its outstanding element. Atmosphere is the emotional flavor of the time and place in which the events of the play unfold. Setting is not atmosphere; environment is not atmosphere. Atmosphere is a mood, transferred through sound, feeling, movement, light, style, into the hearts of the audience.

In this type of play our emotions are not aroused by a thing happening, nor by people, but by an emotion itself. We leave the theater feeling that we have felt Fear, or have been warmed by the fires of Brotherly Love.

In Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, though there is a tragic situation and a strong characterization in old Maurya, the feeling of pathos,

universal in its appeal, but almost abstract in its quality, is dominant. We feel, we have a realization of, pathos.

Synge has written plays of atmosphere; so has Maeterlinck in plays like *The Intruder;* and William Saroyan in *My Heart's in the Highlands* began a series of plays which can best be designated as plays of atmosphere or mood.

The beginning director should hesitate twice before he chooses a play of atmosphere. When he has gained experience and knows his own powers and the acting material required for such a production, then he may yield to the temptation to produce a play of atmosphere. Directing such a play is difficult. Acting it is difficult. Providing a setting and environment for it is difficult. Yet, despite its difficulties, the school theater more than once has succeeded in producing it convincingly. The audience witnessing such a play may be unable to analyze its own reaction, but it will enjoy an experience which, though out of the ordinary, will be satisfactory.

In the fourth type of play, the emphasis of the playwright is on *idea*. In this instance the playwright believes he has discovered a truth which may be expressed dramatically through plot situations and human reactions. He is not first of all interested in making the audience feel, but in giving it information and thought direction in as dramatic a way as his idea will permit him. He develops a plot and creates character to reveal and make explicit the truth of his idea.

He has, let us believe, discovered the truth that there is much injustice in our process of justice. He sets out to write a play on this idea. If he is a Galsworthy, his idea finds its revelation in a play like *Justice* which is dispassionate, without invective or preaching, almost tender. If he is a Eugène Brieux, he writes a drama like *The Red Robe* which assails with satire and invective the French system of criminal justice. If he is a Maxwell Anderson, he writes a *Winterset*, preaching his truth with brutal force, demonstrating the emptiness of revenge, depressing his audience with the hopelessness of justice in our present civilization, and finally, in exalted poetry, telling them to look to the future for hope.

Now each of these three plays of ideas contains moving drama: the idea is expressed through action, through strong feeling, and through characters that live. All plays of idea are not so successful. Lenormand's *Time Is a Dream* is too intellectual and undramatic. Benn Levy's *The Devil Passes*, which reveals the idea that people can never be as bad as they say they want to be, starts with a dramatic prologue, then becomes monotonous because the idea is revealed and made explicit through a number of characters each passing through a similar situation to a similar conclusion.

The director has one outstanding problem with a play of idea: to be sure that the play is not a reading play but one built for stage presentation, for essays in dialogue form are interesting in the library but not on the stage. Plays of idea offer no special problems to the actor. As for the audience, it likes to see a problem discussed in dramatic terms on the stage, if the idea under discussion comes within its own experience. Our times are more and more occupied with the scientific and the humanitarian. Our social conscience is wide awake. A college audience is often remarkably receptive to a play which, while dramatizing an idea, does not become too intellectual or abstract.

COMEDY AND FARCE, TRAGEDY AND MELODRAMA

According to the viewpoint which the playwright takes toward his material, we have a division of plays into comedy, farce, tragedy and melodrama. We may say that almost any theme—love, hate, death, burglary, bigamy, old age—may be treated either lightly or seriously. The playwright finds some dramatic material on the marriage theme; he is amused by it and writes a comedy or farce; he is impressed by its serious values and writes a tragedy or melodrama.

In *comedy* we are amused at real people; what the people do will meet the test of reality. In comedy both the situation and characters are honest and the play moves forward to a logical and honest conclusion. Shaw's *Candida* is a good example of true comedy. A list of comedies might include (parts of) Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night,* Barrie's *What Every Woman Knows,* Kelly's

The Show-Off, Behrman's *The Second Man*, Robinson's *The Far Off Hills*.

In farce, on the other hand, the people are sometimes probable and sometimes improbable; what they do or are departs from reality. We may have probable people doing improbable things, or improbable people doing probable things, but somewhere in the play are improbability and exaggeration. When a character eats a dozen cucumber sandwiches at one sitting; when a sensible business man, because of a wager, suddenly becomes the servant of his business partner, and, upon meeting his fiancée, still behaves exactly like a servant, we have gone beyond comedy and are in farce. Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* is farce; so are *Charley's Aunt*, *Three Men on a Horse*, *Hay Fever*, and *George Washington Slept Here*.

If a director is producing a comedy, his stage business will be governed by the test of reality; if he is producing a farce, he may put his tongue in his cheek and invent absurd and extravagant business, though he should never go beyond the spirit of the play.

Both comedy and farce are played at a faster tempo than is a serious play; but whereas in comedy the pace may be slow enough to allow the audience to think as the play proceeds, in farce the pace must be more rapid; for if the audience is permitted time to think it may begin to reason about the unrealities and absurdities of the farce; then it may become critical and either lose interest or rebel against the absurdities.

The actor, too, must adopt one attitude towards comedy, another towards farce. Comedy calls for restraint and honest motivation in acting; farce calls for freedom and exaggeration in reading, gesture, and movement.

American audiences have little preference between farce and comedy; they like both types of play.

In tragedy we have a series of events in logical sequence; the events have a causal relationship, are emphasized for their serious values, and lead to catastrophe. In tragedy there must be a reason. If a man commits a murder, we must believe that such a

man under such circumstances would have committed that particular murder. In tragedy, as in comedy, we can apply the test of reality.

Tragedy is one of the oldest forms of drama. Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* is a tragedy; so is Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Ibsen's *Ghosts*, and the more modern plays, *Riders to the Sea* by Synge, *The Cherry Orchard* by Tchekov, *He Who Gets Slapped* by Andreyev, *Winterset* by Anderson, *Of Mice and Men* by Steinbeck.

In melodrama, too, we have a series of events, an emphasis on the serious, a catastrophe; but there is no logical relationship throughout; no honest motivation. We are asked to accept the murder, even if we have not sufficient reason to believe the man would have committed it.

The writer of melodrama is interested in giving his audience a thrill; and having his eye on effect, he is willing to sacrifice logic of character or situation in order to obtain his effect. Among well-known melodramas we mention *East Lynne*, *The Two Orphans*, *Broadway*, *The Green Goddess*, *The Front Page*, *The Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse*.

The director, in choosing a serious play for production, ought to be sure whether his choice is tragedy or melodrama. If it is melodrama, he discards a strict adherence to the truth of things, just as he does when directing farce. His task now is to assist the author in giving the audience a series of thrills. He can imagine his production less in terms of music and picture and more in terms of dramatic effects.

The untrained actor can often play tragedy more easily than he can play melodrama, just as he can play comedy more easily than farce. It is easier for him to approach a sincere characterization than it is for him to act the pretense of an illogical characterization. It is often easier to keep him within bounds in tragedy than to make him act with sufficient restraint in melodrama.

As for an audience, it would rather see a melodrama than a tragedy.

Realistic and Romantic Plays

A third division of plays may be made on the basis of whether the playwright is faithful to actuality or whether he departs from actuality into a more ideal or sentimental or adventurous world: a world usually nearer (though in some instances farther from) the heart's desire. If the playwright is faithful to actual life behavior, he writes a realistic play; if he departs from this behavior, he is going towards romanticism.

In the realistic play there is an elimination of the artificial, a minimization of the theatrical, a plot which attempts to imitate the natural in life, characterization as accurate as if it had been written by a scientist, and careful attention to actual representation of speech, manners, and environment. Much modern drama since Ibsen has been realistic. Ibsen set the vogue with *A Doll's House*. Other realistic plays include Tchekov's *The Cherry Orchard*, Hauptmann's *The Weavers*, Galsworthy's *Strife*, Vildrac's *S.S. Tenacity*, and Maugham's *Rain*.

The realistic play places one imperative obligation on the theater workers who are producing it: the obligation of accuracy. The director must be accurate. He must know the life he is attempting to interpret; he must know its surface manifestations—its manners, customs, the clothes it wears, the homes in which it lives; otherwise he will not be cooperating with the author. The actor must give an accurate portrayal of character, even to dialect and manner of speech. Fortunately, realistic acting is not so difficult for beginning actors because they are accustomed to this type of acting; they have grown up with it. The technician cannot go to his imagination for his setting and environment, but must first go to actual life; he is permitted selection and change in detail, but in the main he must copy rather than compose freely. Realistic drama teaches theater workers to observe closely and to report accurately.

The romantic play gives the imagination a place above fact and sets emotion above reason. It takes us away from the common-

place and makes what transpires on the stage seem strange and different from what we find in actual life. Of course, the romantic playwright seeks to make us believe what we see and hear; but we believe through our senses and feelings rather than through our rationalizing faculties.

Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Twelfth Night are romantic plays; so are Goethe's *Faust*, Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, D'Annunzio's *Francesca da Rimini*, and Connelly's *The Green Pastures*. The greatest plays in our language, and in most languages, are romantic plays.

The romantic play is difficult to produce: first, because we are not very familiar with it, since it is a type of play not often seen on school stages; second, because it is often more presentational (that is, it is played to an audience as well as for it) than it is representational; and third, since it was conceived with a free imagination, it should be recreated for the stage with imagination. It is difficult, but it is a challenge to any school group. An audience always enjoys a good romantic play when it is well produced.

All of these types of plays we have been considering overlap one another. A play of situation may have strong characterization; a play which is primarily a character study may contain a pertinent idea, dramatically expressed. So, comedy may overlap farce, a tragedy may, for a scene, descend to melodrama, and a melodrama may be combined with farce. Yet, in the majority of cases, one type predominates and controls our choice for production and our method of proceeding.

Tragedy and comedy are usually plays of character; melodrama and farce are generally plays of situation; realistic plays tend towards the tragic; both the greatest comedies and tragedies tend towards the romantic.

If the beginning director wants his first play to be a success, he will make application of his knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages in producing each type of play by selecting a modern comedy of situation with a small cast and few settings.

Structural Elements in the Play

The theater worker should have at least an elementary understanding of the structural elements in the play and their value and effectiveness on the stage.

PLOT

The plot is the story which begins with a dramatic situation leading to action, the story which is unfolded through dialogue and movement. An audience likes a strong plot.

EXPOSITION

The opening situation is usually combined with, or immediately followed by, the exposition. Exposition is the narration, through dialogue, of the preceding action which we must know before we can get the full meaning of the dramatic situation which is developing. Too much exposition slows up a play.

INITIAL CRISIS

Either in the opening situation or shortly after, we reach our first crisis. In this crisis two opposing forces confront each other; a conflict or clash is imminent.

SUSPENSE

This crisis creates suspense; the audience becomes emotionally aroused over what will happen, or how it will happen, and takes sides in the conflict.

TENSION AND RELEASE

In an acted play there must be a period of mounting action and suspense, followed by a brief period of rest; there must be tension and release, otherwise an audience would be exhausted before the climax is reached. In the old Greek drama there was increasing tension through dramatic action then release during the songs of the chorus; in modern drama there is release through a quieter scene or through the artifice of act divisions with intermissions separating them.

SUCCESSIVE CRISES

The intermission comes just after a high point of interest has been reached; it follows a crisis in which, usually, a new element brings a new suspense. This suggests that a play rises, through a series of crises, to the climax.

THE COMPLICATION

Often successive crises are brought about by the addition of new factors to the plot which complicate the story and raise new questions about what will happen.

CLIMAX

The climax, near the end of the play, is the last crisis; it is the moment of victory or defeat, the break or crash. It dissolves the suspense. We now know the answer to our question: What will happen?

FINAL OUTCOME

The climax is the emotional peak, and often represents the end of our emotional interest in the play. But frequently we are not ready for the final curtain with the climax. We may want to be told what will happen as a result of this climax. The play still needs rounding off. This rounding off is accomplished as rapidly as possible through a few speeches or a piece of action. It cannot take long, for the real dramatic action is over.

SPOKEN LANGUAGE

This whole process of unfolding the play is accomplished through dialogue and movement (with occasional assistance from scenery and lighting). Dialogue to be good should be concise, direct, and in character.

BODILY LANGUAGE

Bodily language works with dialogue in unfolding the play. In most instances it is of secondary importance to dialogue, but since the core of the play is action, it is possible to have a play without

dialogue, but never without movement and bodily language, or the suggestion of bodily language.

If the theater worker, and especially the director, knows the structure of the play and the functions of the structural elements, he will be able to answer such questions as the following: Is the exposition clear and not too long? Does the author tell us so much that interest is lost? Does he destroy his suspense by the inclusion of extraneous material? Is the suspense held too long? Does the play contain a power of appeal for the reader only, or is there enough action for stage presentation? Is the climax weak or strong? Does the dialogue fulfill its legitimate functions? Does the dialogue moralize? Is it commonplace, wandering, or uncertain? Is it merely the author speaking?

The Director's Choice and His Objectives

As a director considers a play for production, let him think for a moment on what is the objective of his theater; let him ask himself once more whether it is to entertain the general public, or to educate a special audience, or to give his students training in acting and stagecraft. His choice of play should always be influenced by his objective.

The Director's Choice and His Actors

As he considers a play, let him likewise think of his available acting material. He may be interested in producing Jackson's *The Bishop Misbehaves*. He will be wise to shift his interest elsewhere if he has no actor who can play The Bishop (who carries the play) in a thoroughly convincing manner. He may want to do Barrie's *Mary Rose*. This is a fine play and his particular audience might welcome it gratefully, but has he a girl who can play Mary Rose with simplicity, appeal, and with the unearthly quality of Barrie's little heroine? And has he an entire cast that will sense and sympathize with Barrie's drama? Perhaps he is thinking of Anderson's *Elizabeth the Queen*. Then he should be

certain of an Elizabeth as well as of a number of male actors who can speak Anderson's lines with reasonable assurance and vigor.

It seems only sensible that we should adopt as one of our rules never to attempt a play which we cannot adequately cast. For a badly acted play, one in which the characters are not clearly or properly interpreted, is unfair to the audience and unfair to the author.

The Director's Choice and His Audience

The audience, too, must not escape the director's study. If it is a small-town audience, untrained in theater going, he would make a mistake if he chose Dodie Smith's *Dear Octopus* or Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion* or Molnar's *Liliom*. If it is an immature audience, he would have little success with a play by Saroyan or Ibsen or Clifford Odets. If it has been having a series of light comedies and farces, he would do well to think of varying the theatrical diet.

Beginning directors do not give enough thought to their audience. Provided they want to keep and increase their audience, they must know something about it. If a director knows its capacities, its enthusiasms and prejudices, he has a better answer to the question, "What play shall I give?" than is to be found in the selection lists published in the books and magazines. He cannot change the prejudices of an audience nor force it to like his own choice of play.

He cannot, of course, discover what an audience wants and will accept by asking its members questions. Frequently they do not know what they want until they see it. In general, they want an experience in the theater, an emotional experience within the range of their feelings and mentalities; but the themes they like and the treatment of the themes are not universal. The director must learn for himself what meets the approval of his particular community. He will probably find that he will not have to play down to his audience; he may be surprised at its intelligence and good taste.

The Director's Choice and His Stage

Lastly, the director, in considering a play, must take into account the stage upon which it will be played. Is his stage large, with an unusually wide opening? Then an intimate comedy with only four characters such as Van Druten's *There's Always Juliet* will be lost on it. Is his stage small and poorly equipped? Then even if he has found a satisfactory actress for Mary Rose, how is he to manage the scenic problems in Barrie's play? For unity and coherence are lost if time is required to change from the "room as it is" to the "room as it was" and back again. And the end of the play will be disappointing unless Mary Rose can walk straight out of the window into the sky.

We do not argue that a director needs a stage with complete modern equipment; not at all; we only say that, when a play is dependent upon certain equipment or certain stage dimensions, then he should have a stage which meets the requirements, or give up this play and choose another one.

5

THE DIRECTOR AND HIS CAST

If a theater has *one* objective, actors are looked upon as individ-
uals to whom the director hopes to give some useful training; if
a theater has *another* objective, they become the material out of
which the director means to recreate a play for the stage: and in
this instance he uses them or refuses them much as a painter em-
ploys his tubes of color when painting a picture.

As a teacher, the director will accept all actor students, and in
the classroom will give them the experience and training of the
theater as best he may. As a director, considering the production
of a public play, he will be more selective, choosing carefully and
impartially those who will fit into his design for the acted play.
In this chapter we will consider him, not as a classroom teacher,
but as a director of public plays. As such a director, his first task is
to discover what sort of material he has from which he may
choose a cast. He may make this discovery through tryouts or
through classroom observation.

Discovering Actors through the Tryout Method

In a tryout the director asks the acting candidate to do certain
things, and he endeavors to evaluate the candidate's present or
potential capabilities on the performance given. Several methods
of tryout are in use.

The Sight-reading Tryout

The most incomplete and unsatisfactory method is exempli-
fied by the director who assembles his prospective actors, explains

briefly a scene, and then asks the candidates to read at sight from the play. This method is unsatisfactory: first, because sight reading has little to do with acting, and second, because a director cannot learn much about a candidate's voice range, imagination, bodily language, or stage sense from such a reading.

The Memorized Tryout

The director may assign a certain reading such as one or more long speeches from a play, or he may have the candidate choose his own speeches from the play. In either case, the reading is memorized and accompanying movement is worked out by the candidate who then presents it before the director for his judgment.

There are good points in such a tryout. The candidate's voice is tested, and his ability to read, his creative imagination, his sense for stage business, and his sense for characterization.

Objections to the tryout are that time is required to prepare for it and the director often wishes to know his material as early as possible in the school term; nothing is determined about whether the candidate will be able to cooperate and take direction: he may prove to be only a solo performer. The tryout is still incomplete.

The Pantomime and Reading Tryout

The director may on Monday, let us say, post on the bulletin board outlines for half a dozen pantomimes which offer opportunities for characterization and for acting out a dramatic situation; with the pantomimes, he may post half a dozen paragraphs of reading matter. The candidates are requested to fill out and prepare one of the pantomimes for presentation, and to study (not memorize) one of the paragraphs for reading. Several days later they appear before the director, perform the pantomimes and read the paragraphs.

Such a pantomime tryout gives the candidate a chance to reveal his bodily language, his creative imagination, his sense for char-

acter, stage sense, and perhaps his power to express emotion; the reading tryout reveals his voice quality and his ability to read the English language intelligently.

Still, this tryout does little more than separate potential actors from those students who cannot act at all. If the candidate is awkward and unclear in his bodily movement, if he is unable to fill out the sketch from his imagination, if he displays no sense for character, if he acts upstage and performs his pantomime so that what he does is not clearly visible to the audience, if he has a weak voice and cannot pronounce simple words, if, in brief, he fails the test completely, then we know definitely that he is not acting material. But even if he does the entire assignment well, we still cannot determine whether he can act, we still have no basis for judging whether he will be able to play Earnest in *The Importance of Being Earnest* or Tom Pryor in *Outward Bound*. The tryout is still incomplete.

THE WORKING TRYOUT

Another director may use a pantomime and reading tryout, but when the candidate has finished with the pantomime, the director then works with him, directing him to change his characterization and his movements. Then he works with the reading, perhaps asking the candidate to read the paragraph as a senator addressing congress or as a colored preacher delivering a sermon or as a condemned man who is to be hanged in the morning. Then perhaps he mounts the stage with him, suggests a simple situation in which the candidate assumes a character who hates or fears the director's character, and he is asked to express this fear in words and bodily reaction.

This tryout is of more value than the others. Still the director cannot be sure of his material. A beginning actor is sometimes shy: he may not show up well in a tryout; he is untrained; he may not know how to respond to the directions given him. Also, much time is consumed in such a tryout. If only ten minutes are allotted to each actor, no more than five or six can be examined in an hour.

A Series of Tryouts

We still have not found a tryout which will tell the director all he needs to know. We might, then, expand the tryout into a series. In one we would test voice, in another bodily language, in a third emotional expression, in a fourth, through a personal conference, we might attempt to form a judgment of the actor's personality, intelligence, and warmth or coldness. We would now be getting closer to the information we need. But how many directors have the time to spend on such a comprehensive series of tryouts? Also, we must keep in mind that actors can never be judged completely from tryouts; they can only be judged after the director has worked with them in rehearsals and seen them in performance.

So, the director uses the tryout method which is most complete for his limited time schedule, makes the best judgment he can, and hopes that he has not been mistaken in too many cases.

Some directors find it useful to keep a card index or a notebook record of their candidates. On the cards are kept such data as the candidate's name, a description of his physical characteristics, his dramatic biography, and comments on his tryout. This may save time in future casting.

Discovering Actors in the Classroom

As we have said, the only satisfactory way to determine whether a boy or girl can act is to assign him a part, work with him, direct him, observe him over a period of weeks or months, and watch him on the stage in a play. Fortunately, in our schools all of this may be done in the classroom, assuming, of course, that work in play production and acting is offered as well as courses in the fundamentals of speech.

In the classroom the director discovers the student's capacity or incapacity for work, his ability to cooperate, how he responds to suggestions; in fact, he discovers nearly all he needs to know about him. So when the student tries out for a specific part in a play, the director can make a fairly accurate judgment on what he will be able to do with the part.

The Beginning Director's Questions

Let us say that classes are under way, the director has held his general tryouts, and has read a number of plays for possible production. The calendar informs him that he must have a play ready in just six weeks. Now, if he is inexperienced, a number of casting questions begin to trouble him.

MISCASTING

One question is: Should I ever miscast, that is, should I give a poor actor a good part if it will be good training for him?

We would say that your objective largely determines the answer. If you are willing to risk bad spots in the play, poor acting, and lack of interpretation, with the consequent lack of sympathy in the audience, you may miscast him for the part. You must remember, however, that your audience may not respond to him, the play will be weak because of him, and the cast may not feel kindly towards him. As a rule, miscasting should be confined to classroom and private performances.

CASTING TO TYPE

Should I cast to type?

Type casting is often condemned without defining what we mean by the term. If we mean that an actor is cast in the same sort of part over and over, a part in which he will be called upon to use the same voice, walk, and mannerisms, then our answer is: No; you should not cast to type because you are withholding from the actor any chance for development. If we mean that because an actor has certain physical characteristics, certain qualities of voice and temperament, he is cast to play a character whose qualities and characteristics are somewhat similar, then we would say that no harm results and type casting is permissible.

After all, we repeatedly cast our actors to general type; we must do so; they have so little training and technique that their physical characteristics, voices and temperaments limit them to general types. Yet, within any general type there are characters

of sufficient variety to provide the actors with training and prevent them from getting into a rut. For instance, we discover a girl who can play Carlotta in *Cock Robin;* if she can play this part, she may also be able to play Anne Darrow in *Double Door,* Cynthia Mason in *Beggar on Horseback,* and Phoebe in *Quality Street;* and there certainly is variety in characterization in Cynthia, Anne, Carlotta, and Phoebe.

Difficult Characters to Cast

What kind of characters are hardest to cast?

For students, characters in middle age are hardest to cast. You should choose your best actors for these parts.

Choosing the Play or Cast First

Should I choose my play first and fit my actors to it, or try to find a play to fit my acting material?

If you know anything about your acting material, and we presume you do through your general tryouts and your classroom work, then you really choose the play and cast together. As you think of your actors, parts they might play in different plays come to mind; as you read different plays, you see certain actors in the parts. But if something must be said on the point of priority, let it be this: in most cases it is far easier to find a play which fits the talents of a particular group of amateur actors, than it is to find actors who can meet the acting requirements of a play which was chosen with no reference to a particular group.

And a last word of warning as you set out to cast your play: try to be fair and not show favoritism. Favoritism can destroy the enthusiasm of a group of amateur actors.

Casting the Play

Let us consider the case of the director who cannot cast his play from students in his acting class, but must cast it from the whole student body. Let us assume that he has held general tryouts, knows something about his material, and has tentatively

selected a play. He has several actors in mind for various parts, but, even so, he calls for special tryouts for the play, first in order to avoid the criticism of partiality, and (more important) because his general tryouts have been incomplete: some candidate whom he has misjudged or overlooked may surprise him.

There are several things he should not do in this casting tryout. He should not ask the actors to read parts without first giving them an opportunity to read the play or to hear it read. He should not take the actor's judgment on the part he wishes to play; many inexperienced actors want to try out for the very kind of part they are unqualified to play. He should not, after a single tryout, assign a part to an actor whom he does not know; the director may be deceived too easily by personality, solo performance, or clever reading, and these are not acting. He should neither accept nor reject an actor without working with him; and even after he has decided that he is fitted for the part, he would be wise to make the selection tentative.

If the director is to cast his play from among his classroom students, his problem is simplified. He knows his material, he probably has more time to work slowly and carefully over his selection, and his tryout is not a formal, hurry-up matter. Casting a play from among classroom students has also the advantage of a keener and more sincere interest on the part of the actors and forebodes an easier problem of discipline for the director. But such casting has the disadvantages of narrowing one's choice of plays, of narrowing one's opportunity for selecting the cast, and it often stamps the production as a departmental function rather than a function of the whole school.

It goes without saying that good, legible copies of the tryout material should be used; and that the director should select beforehand exactly the material he wishes read: certain scenes which are characteristic of the characters and other scenes which contain difficult dialogue.

The director may decide on one cast, announce it, and begin work; or, he may announce a tentative cast while holding alternate choices in mind, work with this tentative cast, shift actors

about in the parts, substitute alternates here and there, and then announce the final cast. This is a better plan, except that production cannot get under way so rapidly. He may even choose two casts, start both of them on the play, rehearse both of them, and choose a final cast only a week before the performance. This competitive method is good for the actors: it encourages study, effort, and accomplishment. But it is hard on the director. He has to keep two plays in rehearsal and this demands a great deal of time; also, his choice of a final cast so late in rehearsals is more likely to result in hurt feelings on the part of the unsuccessful competitors than if he chooses his cast earlier; and he faces the difficulties of changes in costume sizes and of making a unit out of a cast which will have only half a dozen rehearsals together. Even if the two-cast system may not appeal to most directors, it is always wise to choose understudies for the principal parts.

We have not mentioned the senior play, or any of the other plays in which every member of the class or group must be given a part. In these performances, neither the play nor the training of the actors is of great importance; they are usually no more than personal exhibitions for the performers' admiring friends, and so they do not fall within the range of our discussion.

6

ORGANIZATION OF THE STAFF

Necessity for Organization

As soon as the director has decided upon his play and his cast, he should begin the organization of his various theater workers, assign them their tasks, and set them to work.

There may be a few directors left who still believe that "all will turn out well" and that "the play will go on," even though they procrastinate about scenery and costumes and properties until the nights of dress rehearsal; but these are decreasing in numbers and are usually beginners who are ignorant of the vast amount of work a production—even a simple production—entails. If the experienced director lets his work pile up until the dress rehearsals become hectic periods in which a thousand things still remain to be done, and if he maintains that this situation is desirable because it "keeps everybody keyed up and makes for a good performance," he is either showing that he has learned nothing from experience or he is trying to camouflage his own procrastination. Hours of overwork and chaotic, feverish dress rehearsals do not forecast a good performance and never did.

Why is there a necessity for early organization and for putting the staff to work? Because only four weeks stand between the time of the first rehearsal and the opening night; because in these four weeks the play must be rehearsed, polished, and made completely ready for presentation; because scenery must be constructed, painted, changed, or arranged, and a crew rehearsed in handling it; because lighting for the play must be worked out and

the lighting units put in place; because furniture must be located and moved to the theater; because costumes must be made, rented, or borrowed; because a program of publicity must be planned and carried out; because tickets and programs must be printed and ushers obtained; because we must always allow for the unexpected. Why must there be organization? In order that we may have a smooth, orderly production and not one dependent on chance.

Yet this element of organization is conspicuous by its absence in many school plays. The director may seek to shift the responsibility for this lack of orderly progress onto someone else; but he is the one upon whom the blame must fall. In the big schools he may be able to hold his technical director responsible for this lack of organization; in the smaller schools, much of this work we have listed must be superintended by himself. Only rarely will he find a student who has the capacity and training to take charge of one of these units of work and assume full responsibility for its completion.

The Staff

The director needs a staff to assist him in the work of production. What shall we set as a reasonable staff?

First we would list the stage manager. The student assigned this position should be reliable, ingenious, and, if possible, experienced. Stage managers with creative ability sometimes develop into helpful technical directors.

The teacher-director should have an early conference with his stage manager, for this assistant should be quite clear on many phases of the production: on the central idea of the play as well as on scenery, properties, lighting, and costumes. If he is an experienced man (perhaps the instructor in stagecraft in the school) then the responsibility for many of these necessary matters may be turned over to him; but if he is a student, the responsibility had better remain with the director.

The stage manager should possess a copy of the play, should

be present at an occasional rehearsal, and should be ready to take complete charge of the stage at the first dress rehearsal.

The construction of scenery may add one or several to the staff. If the director has a designer, either he or his designer draws the first plans for the settings. Whoever creates them, the director should approve them, after which the designer superintends the turning of the plans into actual scenery. The chief carpenter is sometimes the designer, sometimes a student, occasionally the director himself. Whoever he is, he should construct the scenery from a set of stage plans, drawn to scale.

Construction and painting of scenery should start as soon as rehearsals start; no harm is done if this work starts before. It is an advantage to have the walls of the set up and in place for the first rehearsals when stage movements are assigned to the actors. It is essential that all scenery be complete and in place by the time of the first dress rehearsal.

Either the teacher-director or the technical director has final responsibility for the costumes. The director keeps in touch with the one immediately in charge of the costumes and checks on her progress. She (for the costumer is usually a woman), like the others, needs to start her work early. If costumes are to be made, she receives from the designer or makes, herself, a set of costume designs. When the cast is chosen, she takes measurements, drafts patterns, and the actual work of costuming begins. The costumes should be ready at least three rehearsals before the performance. If costumes are to be ordered from a costume house, she should give the costume company enough time to select them, alter them if necessary, and have them in the theater in time for the three rehearsals. Even if costumes are to be borrowed, the costumer should not wait until the final week before she begins work.

Ordinarily the technician or stage manager supervises the property man. His chief qualification is dependability. Property men have a habit of bringing in "something just as good" because they do not know the exact requirements of the play. This member of the staff, like the others, should know the play; he should make out his list of properties, should know exactly what

he is to procure, and should understand that no substitutes will be accepted without consultation with the technician or director.

As soon as the actors have memorized their lines, the property man should have dummy properties for them to work with. Again, as with other staff members, he should have everything to be used in the production ready for the first dress rehearsal.

The electrician works under the supervision of the technician or stage manager. (It is understood that there is no rule about who appoints the several members of the staff or to whom they are immediately responsible. The goal is an effective organization with reliable overseers for the different units of work.)

The electrician, in rare instances, is a designer in light who builds his lighting solidly into the pattern of the play. In such instances he is not a subordinate but one of the creators of the acted play. In most school theaters, however, he arranges the lighting at the suggestions of the director or technician. If such is the case, he need not start actual work as early as most of the others, though he should know the colors he will use so that the making of costumes will not be held up. He may plan his light plot during the first weeks, but often he will not know exactly which units he will use or how he will use them until the scenery is in place and the actors in costume. He must have his light units ready for experimentation so that he will not halt a rehearsal for half an hour while border lights are lowered and raised or while heavy units are transferred from the stage floor to the light bridge. By the time of the second dress rehearsal he should have his lighting worked out and his light plot set.

The stage crew, embracing the curtain man and those who handle the scenery, is appointed and supervised by the stage manager or technician. The crew will vary in number according to the amount of work required in changing scenery. The men should have one rehearsal before dress rehearsals begin and perhaps another between dress rehearsals at a time when they can have the stage completely to themselves.

The publicity manager, too, should begin his work early; he should plan his publicity carefully and not wait until a week before

the performance to start thinking of newspaper stories and window cards.

A last member of the staff, appointed by the director, is the prompter. He should begin attending rehearsals after the first week and should be in the prompter's place regularly during the last week or ten days.

A reasonable staff, then, consists of a stage manager or technician, carpenter, painter, property man, costumer, electrician, publicity manager, prompter, and stage crew. The director can get along with fewer members, and he can add more if he finds that he has at hand trained people who can be helpful in the work of production.

(The work of the staff members will be discussed in detail in later chapters.)

If the staff is organized and set to work at the time rehearsals begin, and if the director keeps his eye on the progress being made (he is hereby warned that he will have at least one laggard who will have to be prodded along), he need not dread the dress rehearsal period nor subject his cast to those long, nerve-wrecking hours which too often result from lack of timely preparation.

Organization of Rehearsals

There is one other piece of organization work which demands the director's attention if complete and timely preparation for dress rehearsals is to be made: the organization of his rehearsals. He cannot, of course, take the twenty or thirty rehearsal periods and decide, definitely, four weeks in advance, just what he is going to accomplish each night; but he can have a plan; he can at least make out a tentative schedule of the number of rehearsals and the hours of meeting. Just as he expects his staff to prepare their work so that it shall be in readiness on the first night of dress rehearsal, so should he prepare his own work for completion on that night.

7

INTERPRETATION, REVISION, AND
THE PROMPT-BOOK

THE DIRECTOR has selected a play. He has read the play carefully
a number of times, has cast it, and is assembling his staff. He is
now ready to start rehearsals. He is ready, that is, if he is sure of
how he wants to interpret the play and if he has a plan for do-
ing it.

Instead of our yielding to the temptation which, at about this
place in a book, assails authors, urging them to set forth their
pet principles and theories on production, we make the good re-
solve to keep our theories to ourselves; and we beg permission to
be old-fashioned as we request the reader simply to follow several
directors as they get the play and themselves ready for rehearsals.
Perhaps we can learn what we need to know from their behavior.

The Purpose of the Play

First, let us go on a short journey with the careless or inex-
perienced director who puts his play into rehearsal without know-
ing what the play means or how it is to be presented. Near the
end of the second week, when characterization and motivation
become increasingly important, things begin to go wrong at re-
hearsals: speeches and action seem to have less and less meaning;
they fail to establish a relationship with a scene or situation in a
preceding act.

One of two things now happens: either the director goes ig-
norantly ahead, not sensing what is wrong, with the result that his

actors present to a public an unclear, confused play; or he realizes at this point that he does not know what the play is about. nor quite how to interpret it. The play, he remembers, seemed clear enough when he read it. (When reading a play we can accept many things without question and can easily overlook the matter of motivation; but characterization, motivation, purpose, call relentlessly for clarity when the play is put on a stage.) So the director has no choice but to halt rehearsals while he makes a re-analysis and a re-evaluation of the play. New ideas, tardily discovered, may necessitate changes in interpretation, even in character and stage business. These changes are bound to confuse the actors, with a resultant loss of confidence in the director.

The director of intelligence and experience avoids this mistake. He knows exactly where he is going before he starts out. He studies the play and he is not satisfied until he knows the author's aim and purpose—just what he wishes to say to an audience. So, he either discovers the true aim and purpose, or if the play permits of more than one interpretation, he decides upon what he *believes* is the aim and purpose, and how this aim and purpose may be put across in his acted play.

It is not a bad plan for the director to state this purpose of the author to the cast at the first rehearsal; and to restate it several times later on. Let us imagine that he has chosen Molnar's *Liliom* for production. If so, he might reasonably say to his cast: "We are beginning rehearsals on Molnar's famous play *Liliom*. There always has been a difference of opinion about the meaning of this play and how it should be played. It is part realism and part fantasy. We are going to play it as fantasy throughout. The story will be unreal. The characters will live for us, not in a real world, but in a world of the imagination. The play, however, does have a real theme. It is stated in Liliom's dying words, 'Nobody's right, but they all think they are. A lot they know.' This is the philosophic idea in the play. It is real. So our job is to express a real theme or idea through the imaginary characters who are placed in a fantastic story."

(We might remark in passing that *Liliom* is a difficult play, and that this task suggested by our director would be a big undertaking with student actors.)

The Interpretation of the Play

The director takes a simple and natural step when he investigates the meaning and looks for the central idea of the play. It should be a second natural step, though not such a simple one, for him to decide how, with his acting and stage material, he will be able to interpret this idea to the audience. This is not always easy because a printed play reveals the idea in one way, and the acted play in a different way.

The printed play is revealed to the reader through the medium of written words: through dialogue, stage directions, comments, suggestions, explanations by the author, and through style. The acted play is revealed to the audience through the mediums of spoken words, physical movement, sound, picture, line, and color, and these mediums reside in the actors, stage space and settings, costumes, lighting, and make-up.

After studying *Liliom* let us assume that the director has decided that the theme is clear, the idea is real and convincing, but the story is fantastic. Now how can he get this over to the audience?

He may think of his settings and design, construct and paint a series of sets which *suggest the idea* of an amusement park, a photographer's house, and a railroad embankment, but which possess the indistinctness of a dream or the slight distortion which the imagination gives to reality; he may even think of playing the play behind a gauze curtain in order to give it a sense of remoteness. Then he may think of the possibilities for unreality to be found in his costumes, lighting, and make-up. So far, so good.

Now he considers his actors and he may decide that they, too, must not be quite real. In their movement, their gesture, the tone and inflection of their voices, they should approach reality but never quite meet up with it. At the same time they must put across

the idea as one applicable to human life; they must believe in the reality of their unreal characters.

Right here the director recognizes that he is confronted with a serious difficulty. His acting material is always imperfect and uncertain. In this instance he is asking something of his actors which requires technique and imagination. Have they the imagination to grasp what he wants? Can he give them the technique, the physical and vocal facility to play the characters in this way?

He must now make another decision: either to conduct the production as an experimental test of his own ability to teach and of his actors' ability to act (even if the presentation of the play does not adequately reveal the idea), or he must give up the thought of producing this play and choose something more within the range of his and his actors' capabilities.

Most plays are not so difficult of interpretation as *Liliom.* Philip Barry's *Spring Dance,* for instance, is a story play, designed for light entertainment, yet possessing clear, well-differentiated characters. The director easily discovers that its purpose is to entertain through humorous characterizations and college wit and wisecracks; he easily determines how he wants to interpret the play and what he will need in acting for the interpretation; lastly, he decides that he has the actors and stage, and can contrive the settings for this interpretation.

He should remember that a play sometimes permits of two or more different interpretations. *Hamlet,* for example, has been interpreted as an action story, a character study, a virtuoso piece for the elocutionist, a study of a neurotic, and in dozens of other ways, all of which have been accepted by the audience. The point is that he should decide upon a definite interpretation and be sure that he has the ability and the acting material to make this interpretation convincing and acceptable to the audience.

Revising the Play for Production

Sometimes the director knows what the play is about, knows how he wishes to restate it in stage terms, but feels that some

editing should be done here and there before it is adaptable to his actors, stage, or audience. This raises the question: how much freedom should the director take in revising the play for production?

At the outset, let us say that the director should respect the play and try to understand what the author has in mind; he should decide to revise only when he is sure that he can improve, in his stage presentation, on what the author has written. We may add that if, then, he feels that something ought to be done, he is free to make such minor changes in the text as will render the play more manageable on his stage, more actable by his cast, and more dramatic to his audience.

Common revisions which he sometimes finds advisable are:

1. The cutting or breaking up of long speeches.

2. The deletion of offensive or archaic references or speeches.

3. The playing of the action in a fewer number of settings than the author indicates.

4. The cutting of speeches and scenes which are too talky.

5. The revision of occasional lines which would be unclear to his audience.

6. The rearrangement of scenes for greater unity or swifter playing.

7. The modification of action because of lack of ability in his actors or deficiency in his stage equipment.

CUTTING OR BREAKING UP LONG SPEECHES

Amateur actors cannot deliver extremely long speeches effectively. In the case of a long speech, it may be cut (if some of the ideas in it are extraneous or repetitious) and broken up (if all the material in it should be kept).

In *The Cradle Song* there is an instance of a long speech which needs to be kept. In Act I, the Prioress unfolds the letter which has accompanied the child who has been left at the convent, and reads it. It is a long letter, and, as the author has written it, there is no break in its reading. As we have said, we must keep most of the material of the letter. We cannot do much cutting. But we can

break it up with interruptions from the other nuns, and so give the reading the effect of dialogue rather than of monologue.

When the Prioress reads that the writer of the letter is a woman of the streets, the Vicaress may interrupt with "I knew it!"; when the letter says that it cost the mother something to leave the child, the Vicaress disagrees with "I doubt it!"; when the letter tells how the child was not wanted, another one comments "Poor child!"; when the letter asks them to protect and keep the child, Sister Joanna cries "Yes, yes!" So the effect of a long, unrelieved recitation is avoided.

DELETION OF OFFENSIVE OR ARCHAIC REFERENCES

Offensive or archaic references and speeches should be deleted. In Irwin Shaw's *Bury the Dead,* the two prostitutes and their comments might be offensive to some audiences; the characters may be eliminated without harm to the play. In Act I, Scene 2, of *She Stoops to Conquer,* Tony says, "When I'm of age, I'll be no bastard, I promise you." This line might be cut on the grounds of offensiveness; also the second verse of the song he sings which villifies Methodist preachers and their "scurvy religion."

In the same scene certain musical titles are mentioned: "Water Parted" and "Ariadne." These titles meant something to an English audience of 1773 but they mean nothing to us now. They had better go. In *The Ticket-of-Leave Man,* a Victorian melodrama which has been frequently revived, there are many speeches which should be cut because their meanings have been lost. There is the speech of Sam, "You're the right sort, you are, and sooner than rile you, I'll cut tips, burn 'Bell's Life' and take to Capel Court and the 'Share List' and that's respectable, you know." In the same play there is this bit of dialogue between Hawkshaw and Dalton:

> HAWKSHAW: In the joining way, may I ask, sir, or in the breeding?
> DALTON: Sometimes one and sometimes t'other—always ready to turn the nimble shilling.
> HAWKSHAW: My own rule.

Nothing is accomplished by having the actors repeat lines which contain no meaning for the audience.

Playing the Action in Fewer Sets

At times a play which is just what the director wants calls for too many sets. He cannot afford so many sets; and, more than this, changing them would be troublesome on his small stage. Let him see if, with a few revisions in the text, he can play act two in the same set as act one, or act three in the same set as act two. Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* calls for three sets: Algernon Moncrieff's Flat, the Garden at the Manor House, and the Morning Room of the Manor House. With very little change the last act can be played in the garden just as easily as in the house. Often such simplification results in no harm to the play and no loss to the production.

Cutting Talky Speeches and Scenes

Dramatic authors sometimes have a tendency to let their characters talk too much; they repeat themselves, they speak on matters not closely related to the action of the play, they philosophize. (This last is a trait of the characters in Continental drama.) Now, professional actors may be able to hold an audience through a long, talky play; amateurs cannot; so abridgment is often desirable. When cutting to shorten a play, the director should keep in mind the central idea and retain all speeches which are necessary to its delineation; and he should keep speeches which reveal character or move the action forward. He may cut repetitious speeches, speeches which digress, speeches which are mental rather than emotional in their effect.

Revision of Unclear Lines

Time or distance sometimes makes an important word or line unclear to our audience. In such a case, words or lines should be substituted for those in the text. In the scene from *She Stoops to Conquer* mentioned above, we have the line: "They look wound-

ily like Frenchmen." In order to get the meaning, "very much" should be substituted for "woundily."

A little Scotch play was given before a midwestern audience. In the play the word *wean* (wēn) was spoken. An understanding of the meaning of wean was necessary to an understanding of why the son and father had an altercation which resulted in the father's death. But at the first performance many members of the audience did not know the meaning of the word and were puzzled by the play. At the second performance the word "child" was substituted for "wean" and the reason for the altercation was clear to the audience.

REARRANGEMENT OF SCENES

Some periods are more leisurely minded than others, and their dramatists write more leisurely plays. At some times theater stages, either because they employ no scenery at all or because they have a number of stage machines for handling scenery swiftly, permit their dramatists to write plays containing a large number of scenes. When we meet up with a leisurely play or one with many scenes, we may feel that there shoud be a rearrangement of scenes for greater unity and an elimination of some scenes to make for swifter playing time.

If we were considering the production of *Hamlet*, we would feel this desire to rearrange and combine scenes. In Act I, Scene 2 could follow Scene 1 without a break, and Scene 5 could be made a continuation of Scene 4. This would give us three scenes in place of five. If, in addition, we cut the 846 lines in the act to approximately 650 (which is possible) we have an act which seems more unified, less talky, and easier to stage than the reading version.

Even in modern plays we occasionally feel the need for rearrangement. Anderson's *Winterset* begins with a short scene between Trock and Shadow under the bridge, a scene which does not start the dramatic action; then it shifts to the cellar apartment of old Esdras. Unless we had facilities for a very quick change, we would have to drop the curtain for a brief intermission after three or four minutes of dialogue at the very beginning of

the play. This is obviously too early for such a break. We could rearrange these scenes, beginning our play with Scene 2, and incorporating in it the necessary part of the dialogue between Trock and Shadow. Nothing vital need be lost by such a change.

MODIFICATION OF ACTION

The director, reading the play, frequently finds that he must modify a piece of business because he can foresee that his actors will not be able to perform it convincingly, or because he does not have the equipment for playing it as it is written.

In a one-act play the script called for one of the men characters to pick up a girl, make her a speech as he held her in his arms, and exit with her up a flight of stairs. Neither the speech he made to her nor the exit up the stairs was essential to the play. They merely made a sensational exit. The staircase was not needed for any other business. In order to keep this speech and exit a flight of stairs would have to be made, and a man chosen for a part because he had the physical strength necessary for carrying a girl up these stairs. The director modified this exit. The man was given another exit line which he spoke with his arm around the girl as he hurried her off left through a doorway.

This modified business, well done, contributed more to the play than would the more elaborate business, badly done.

In *Emperor Jones*, O'Neill calls for seven settings in the forest, six of them differing one from another. Among these settings he asks for a road, a circular clearing, a river bank with the river visible in the moonlight, a structure of boulders resembling an altar. The school director will modify these scenes. He must because he will not have the facilities for the quick changes. He may use a dozen or fifteen set pieces suggesting tree trunks which he will move about and light differently to suggest the different places in the forest. So also, he may eliminate the appearance of the Little Formless Fears of Scene 2, having them visible only in the imagination of Emperor Jones.

These are among the common types of revision made in plays for school production. The director should be permitted any

change which, while respecting the aim and purpose of the play, will make for a better stage presentation in his theater, by his actors, and for his audience.

The Design of His Production

The director knows what the play is about, how he wants to interpret it, and he has made several revisions in it for his particular production. These steps are reasonable and natural and ought not require any great ingenuity or special theories. The next step, however, asks a special talent of the director: a creative imagination.

His task is to make, or put together, something new; to compose an acted play out of the elements of the written play, actors, stage, and background. In doing this he becomes either a craftsman or an artist.

Composition, whether in writing, dancing, music, or the other arts, is based on design. Design denotes arrangement. Pictorial design is concerned with the arrangement of lines, masses, and colors; writing with the arrangement of words; music with the arrangement of sounds. These compositional elements in any art are arranged according to certain principles of design. Among these principles are unity, coherence, emphasis, balance, rhythm, and harmony.

Unity suggests a oneness and often a singleness of effect.

Coherence suggests a sticking together, no loose ends, good transitions.

Emphasis calls attention to the important things.

Balance suggests equality of weight or equality of emphasis.

Rhythm suggests related significant movement.

Harmony has to do with the fitness of things and suggests that the elements shall have something in common.

As we said in Chapter III, the director uses as a base for his production: movement somewhat as it is used in the dance; sound as it is sometimes used in music; line, mass, and color as they are used in pictorial composition. His stage becomes now a place of

movement, now a place of tone, pitch, and inflection, now a place of pictorial groupings. So, as he designs his production, as he sets down what he will have his actors say or do against a certain background and in certain lights, his procedure is guided by the answers to two questions or sets of questions which he asks and must answer for himself.

His first question is: "Do I want this scene to be pictorial or contain much movement or be something to hear, or do I want the scene to be a combination of these things?" The question concerns what the base for the design shall be.

His second question is: "As I arrange my furniture, as I think of lights and colors and costumes, as I devise my stage business, am I paying attention to the principles of design? Will my production have unity? Will the parts stick together? Am I giving emphasis to the right characters, the right ideas, the right places on the stage? Will my stage be in balance with not too much action or too much furniture or too many exits on one side of the stage? Will my actors, in their relation to one another and to the stage levels and stairways, suggest some sort of related movement, and will the spectator's eye be carried from one line to another? Will the production have harmony and not mix farcical movement with realistic movement, modernistic furniture with Victorian, or a garish background in raw colors with costume colors of pastel shades?" This series of questions concerns the use of the principles of design.

Design in production should tend to make the director a creator and not an imitator. Creative work brings him much more satisfaction than when he imitates a professional production or follows blindly a director's manual. The successful application of design calls for thought and much practice; it requires of the director a creative imagination.

The Prompt-Book

The director incorporates his production plan and design in a copy of the play which is made into a prompt-book. Perhaps he

jots down on a flyleaf of his playbook a few general notes on his idea of the play and his intended interpretation. Certainly he makes in the text all the revisions, all the cuttings, changes, abridgments, he has decided upon. Then perhaps on a separate piece of paper he draws a floor plan for each setting and indicates the positions of the articles of furniture. This drawing is more usable if drawn to scale. Now he begins working out his stage movements and business.

He does not always work out his stage business from a floor plan. He may construct a stage model, and, using little figures for his characters, move them about, making complete notes of their movements in his text.

Or, if the setting is simple and the characters few, he may dispense with this model or floor plan drawn to scale, and, using only the floor diagram found in the book (or one he has drawn in), may work out his business, keeping in his mind where each character is located as he proceeds with the scene.

The most practical plan seems to be the floor plan drawn to the scale of a half inch to one foot. He can use small buttons for his characters. Then visualization of the stage is easy and is always complete; he can see at a glance where every character is located and will not forget about the position of some character who has not spoken for some time.

How he shall make the notes about his stage business, whether by a series of abbreviations in the margin beside the dialogue, or by a number of stage diagrams (one for each page) on which the characters' movements are indicated by a line drawn with a colored pencil (each character having his own color), or whether he devises a set of unique hieroglyphics which is understandable only to himself, is a matter for him to decide. His sole object is to prepare a set of directions which he (and perhaps the prompter) will be able to decipher when the play is put into rehearsal.

The prompt-book should contain one other type of information: brief but pertinent comments on character, on reactions, on how he wants a line spoken, on how he wants a scene played (whether slow or fast, broken or smooth), on the many points

which occur to him as he works over the play and sees and hears the presentation in his imagination.

'It is apparent that the margins of the pages in an ordinary playbook will scarcely provide sufficient space for the recording of all the things we have indicated. Which suggests that two copies of the playbook may be taken and cut up, each page pasted on a separate sheet of typewriting paper, and the whole bound together into a prompt-book. Such a book will give ample room for all the production notes.

8

STAGE MOVEMENT

THE EXPRESSION "stage business," as used by most directors, includes both the movement of the actor about the stage and his actions, such as rising, sitting, gesticulating, and handling properties. When he works out his business for his prompt-book, the director usually concentrates first upon the business of movement about the stage. In this Chapter, unless otherwise indicated, such movement, rather than both movement and general stage business, will be meant.

The Questions about Stage Movement

During the course of a year, a teacher of directing has a number of recurring questions asked him on the subject of stage movement. Some of them are:

1. Should stage movement be worked out beforehand, or should the director begin working it out at the first rehearsal?

If he works out his movement at rehearsal he may, since actual actors are on an actual stage, find movement which will not have to be changed later, he may occasionally discover a piece of "inspired" movement, and he may receive a little help from his actors; but if he works it out beforehand, he can tie his movement more completely into the design of the play, he can spend time in thought and experimentation, he will not take up the time of his cast while debating whether to move an actor over here or over there. Let the director try both ways and make his choice. Most directors agree that careful planning beforehand, supplemented by occasional rehearsal discoveries, is the more desirable.

2. If the movement is to be planned beforehand, how much should be planned—just the main movements and behavior of his actors, or all business, down to the small details?

Most of the movement and business will have to be planned by the director at some time or other. So, if he wishes, he may plan them down to the smallest detail before he begins rehearsals (though he should not trouble his actors with details of movement, position, and business at the first rehearsals); or, he may plan the important movement and general business for his prompt-book and fill in the details as the play grows and the characters develop. This question is largely one of how the individual director likes to work.

3. Why not let the actors instead of the director work out some of their own movement and business?

For a number of reasons. First, because the actor, at the beginning rehearsal, does not know his character well enough to work out characteristic and revealing business. Second, if each actor worked out his own movement and business, how would the scenes acquire pictorial value? how could we obtain unity? Third, the director knows the whole play and how it is to be interpreted, and at the time of the first rehearsals he is the only one who does; he knows that part of the interpretation is to be made through stage movement; and he knows what each actor should contribute in movement towards the interpretation of the play.

Of course, if during a rehearsal an actor says, "I've thought up a piece of business for this place," the director should be quick to suggest, "Go ahead and try it"; and if the business is good, he should keep it. Occasionally the actor can improve on the director's business. But from most points the director, not the actor, is the logical one to determine business and movement.

4. Should the director ever change any of his stage movement or business?

Certainly he should. He may make an error in calculating the ability of his actors to handle an intricate piece of business he has devised. He may visualize a movement which, on the stage, appears entirely wrong. A door right center may have to be moved

instage, thus making certain movements impracticable. He may find that a boy is too short to play close to a tall girl, and he revises his movement so that they stand farther apart. He may have made a mistake in copying his directions in his prompt-book. We could enumerate dozens of instances in which he might find it necessary or advantageous to change his business. Too many changes are difficult for the actors to remember and changes during the last week of rehearsals should be avoided; otherwise, he should feel free to substitute movement and business when they will improve his routine.

5. Should the director follow the stage movement just as it is set down in the play text?

We have already suggested that he should not. Sometimes the play he is using is a reading version and not an acting version. Sometimes the author has not worked out the movement carefully. Sometimes the director has found it necessary or desirable to rearrange his set and furniture because of his stage conditions. Sometimes his actors simply cannot make convincing the action as called for in the text.

6. Should the director assign little or much business to his actors?

The play, of course, goes far in determining whether the actors should be motionless most of the time or be moving about. Farce and melodrama demand more movement than comedy and tragedy. Likewise, a scene in which the characters are nervous and excited suggests more movement than a scene of exposition. This general advice may be given, however: the majority of amateur plays do not possess enough movement; movement adds life to a play; it is better to err in having too much movement and business than in having too little, provided always that the action can be motivated.

Design and Stage Movement

We have suggested that a production should have design, and that design is composed according to certain principles. We have also said that the present-day stage is a picture stage. These asser-

tions may lead a pictorial-minded director to look upon stage movement solely as a means for grouping his actors into interesting pictures. Movement has a more important function than this. Such a viewpoint leads to the danger of making design, not drama, the end to be obtained.

Motivation in Movement

There should be a reason for every movement, and design is not the reason. To tell an actor to move three steps to the right without telling him clearly why his character should so move, makes the movement one which is without meaning; therefore, when he takes the steps the movement seems to say to the audience, "These three steps to the right are being taken because the director told the actor to move." If the director cannot find a good reason in the character, the situation, the emotion, or in technical necessity for the actor making the movement, he should not ask him to make it.

Kinds of Movement

We may divide movement into two kinds. First, there is the necessary movement, such movement as getting a character on and off stage, making room for a character to sit down, helping a wounded character to a cot, walking to a telephone. Such movement is necessary to the action of the play. Unfortunately, it often is the only kind of movement worked out by the beginning director.

There is a second kind of movement: that which, while not absolutely necessary, nevertheless makes the play more clear or dramatic. For instance, movement may be devised which interprets character; movement may make a scene more dramatic— as when a strong speech is augmented by a forward movement on the part of the speaker and a backward movement on the part of the listeners; movement may make a quiet scene more interesting to watch; movement may bring the stage group into a striking pictorial composition.

The director should not rest content when he has worked out only the necessary movement.

Functions of Movement

It is apparent that movement has more than one function. Thinking more definitely of function, we see that movement may help reveal the story, may interpret the character, may indicate a change in mood, idea, or attack, may gain attention (that is, it may seem to say to an audience "look this way now"), it may show emotional reaction, it may give variety to the visual element of the play, or it may bring the actors into positions which have dramatic pictorial value.

Variety in Stage Movement

The director, who begins to work out stage movement before he thinks of the meaning and the possibilities of movement, often uses only a few straight lines of movement from the sides of the stage to center and back again. He should remember that there is straight movement from left to right, there is diagonal movement, movement upstage and down, circular movement, movement which reverses itself. The movement within a scene may have great variety.

Contrasting Movement

Contrasting movement on the part of stage characters may be a swift, simple way of telling the audience something important. If there is an exciting moment in which something happens in the street below, and if one character walks slowly, casually, to the window to look out while another walks hurriedly, the attitudes of the two characters towards the event in the street are revealed more clearly and swiftly than they could be revealed through dialogue. If two characters are asked to be seated, and one takes a long walk and sits in a distant chair, while the other takes a short walk to a chair near by, the contrasting lengths of the movements

may tell the audience a great deal about the different reactions of the two characters to the third character.

Triangular Movement

Much has been said about the triangular form assumed when three (or more) actors are on the stage, and about the attendant movements which place the actors at the points of the triangle. There are both logical and theatrical reasons for this triangular form. Dialogue, or what in life is conversation, is like a ball which is tossed about from speaker to speaker. The logical formation for these speakers is facing or partly facing one another. On the stage we cannot simulate this formation exactly, otherwise we would have a bunching of actors, one or more of whom would be standing with his back to the audience and covering the upstage actors; and an audience wants to see the actors when they are speaking. So we form a triangle, the points of the triangle being at right, left, and upstage, and the ball of dialogue is tossed across the stage, then up center, then down left or right, and so on. This meets the requirement of logic in conversational behavior and the theater requirement that the audience, at most times, shall be able to see the faces of the speakers. (In specific instances it is not only permissible, but desirable, that an actor speak with his back to the audience.)

The director, then, often devises movement which will bring his actors into a triangular formation; and to avoid monotony, he often moves his triangle about the stage and shifts its shape and the lengths of its sides.

Now two last points about stage movement. The first is that the eye will generally distract the ear which means that a movement will divert the audience from what is being said. The second point follows as a corollary: a director should not have an actor move while another character is speaking, except when that movement is a comment on what the speaker is saying; otherwise the movement diverts attention from the speaker to the actor in motion.

9

REHEARSALS

I⊤ is during the rehearsal periods that the director meets his greatest test. During rehearsals he assumes sole responsibility; he becomes teacher and critic, sympathetic friend, and, perhaps, slave driver; he continues his work as a creative artist, using that most uncertain of artistic materials, the amateur actor.

A Few Paragraphs of Advice

As the director sets out on his long task of rehearsing his cast, there are several points he should hold in mind about rehearsals.

He should not try to conduct rehearsals just as he has seen his teacher or somebody else conduct them; he should conduct them in his own way, so long as his way is compatible with his own temperament, and provided his way permits him to get on with people and leads them to work with him and for him. He may bluster about, he may be hard and exacting, he may use a quiet voice and an easy manner, if such is his natural, unaffected way of working. Let him be himself and he will be nearer right than if he tries to be anyone else.

As he rehearses his cast, he will still have to be a teacher. If he were directing professionals, he could tell his people what to do and expect them to do it; but he is directing untrained actors. He will have to tell them not only what to do but frequently how to do it and why it ought to be done that way.

He should have his plan for the entire rehearsal period well in mind. He should know, approximately, how many rehearsals

will be possible, how long he will spend on each act, when he must demand that his actors lay aside their books, when he must begin tightening the play.

He must remember that the individual rehearsal period is a time for rehearsing and that he should use it for nothing else. It is not the time for doing those things which can be done privately or outside the rehearsal period; it is not the time to study the play; it is not the time for long arguments; it is not the time for actors to memorize their lines. He needs every minute of the rehearsal period for building up parts of the production which he cannot work on at any other time.

He has to maintain discipline at rehearsals. How much discipline will be needed depends on himself and his cast. Just how he shall enforce discipline is determined by his own temperament. But in his own way he must impress upon his actors that the stage is a workshop and not a playroom.

Time and Length of Rehearsals

Just what time of day the director shall rehearse is generally dependent upon what time is available. Evening is a much better time than late afternoon.

Over how many weeks the rehearsals shall extend depends upon several things. A long play, a play in blank verse, a play in many scenes and with many characters, needs more weeks of rehearsing than a short, modern, realistic play of few characters. When the cast is able to rehearse every day, less time is required than when they can rehearse only two or three nights a week. No play should be put into performance without three full weeks of rehearsal, otherwise it will lack finish and will probably be little more than a well-memorized routine. No play should be rehearsed longer than six full weeks because by this time the director's imagination and creative powers will have grown dull, and the actors will be getting stale in their parts. Four full weeks, if that time is well used, allow adequate time for preparation.

The length of the individual rehearsal period is determined by

the capacity of the actors for sustained hard work. Most actors begin to show weariness after two and a half hours. A rehearsal extending beyond three hours is often a waste of time. On the other hand, an hour rehearsal is too short for much accomplishment. The best rehearsal length seems to be from two hours to two and a half hours.

At first rehearsal the director posts a schedule stating the time and place of rehearsals for the next week, or for several weeks if he is able to make out such a schedule; the acts and scenes to be rehearsed each night are posted in advance whenever possible.

The First Rehearsal

By the time of the first rehearsal each member of the cast should have a complete copy of the play or at least a complete copy of the scenes and acts in which he appears. This is much more sensible than the use of "sides," which is the name for a cutting of the play in which the actor is given his own lines and only the cue lines of the other actors. Happily, this custom of using sides, frequently found in the professional theater, has never been adopted by the amateurs.

Just what should take place at this first rehearsal is a question which has not yet been settled. One director insists that he must begin by reading the play and explaining it to the cast. Another will declare that the cast should do the reading; that they should sit around in a circle, read their own parts, and ask questions. A third will argue that it is reasonable at a first rehearsal to begin blocking out stage movement and business.

The first director defends his policy by declaring that the cast needs a conception of the play as a whole; that the time for them to get it is before they begin work; that they cannot hope to get far until they know the director's interpretation of the play; that many plays are too subtle or obscure for the amateur actors to understand without assistance.

The second director says that it is the cast and not the director who should do the reading; they need the practice and he does

not. He says that he wants them to show him how much or how little they understand of the play, so that he can talk to the point about the play and prepare them for their first rehearsal on the stage.

The third director (having conceded the exception that obscure and subtle plays should be read and explained to the cast by the director) asserts that although both the other directors have fine theories, such theories, when put in practice, take up valuable time and actually accomplish very little. He argues that the time for discussion and explanation is later on, after the actors have studied the play and worked with it. Points may be taken up later, he says, as the actors come to them in rehearsals; and explanations then will be clearer and have more meaning. Therefore, he concludes, the time of the first rehearsal is best spent in blocking out the movement and business for the first act.

Let the beginning director try the different theories; and let him adopt the one which, for him, seems most useful.

Blocking Out

Either after the reading rehearsals just mentioned or without them, the director sets to work blocking out the main movement for the first act. If his technical director has already started work on the scenery, it may be possible to have the walls of the set, with their openings, in place on the stage for this rehearsal. Working with the scenery from the first should be encouraged. It makes for speedier progress and more accurate routine of movement.

If there is nothing but a bare stage, the director in some way designates where the walls of the set will be, and arranges dummy furniture around the floor space. It goes without saying that he should be careful of his dimensions, accurate as to the positions of his openings, and should place his furniture exactly where it should be.

He sees that all the actors have pencils and instructs them to write in their copies of the play all their crossings and stage positions, together with any other notes pertaining to their parts which

he may give them. He will have to repeat this instruction because there is always someone who thinks he can remember everything without notes.

Now he goes through the act (or whatever unit of the action he has decided upon), asking the actors to make their entrances, 'read their lines, move about as he dictates, and mark down their movements in their playbooks.

When the act has been run through once, if there is still time, and there generally is, he will run through it a second time.

There is but little instruction he should attempt to give his actors at this rehearsal except to tell them where to move and, if it seems necessary, why they should make the move. During this rehearsal the director instead of the prompter is holding the prompt-book, though it is not too early for the prompter to be present.

The Second Rehearsal

With the second rehearsal, we reach a second point of contention. The contention revolves around the question: Shall we now block out the business for the second act, or shall we continue with act one, working on it not only through this second rehearsal, but until movement and motivation are well set?

During these first rehearsals, when the actors have not yet memorized lines or progressed very far with characterization, and when they are not ready to do much with reading of lines, there is little that can be accomplished beyond learning positions and acquiring a general familiarity with the play. The actors need this general familiarity with the whole play. It seems that not much can be gained now by concentrating on act one. At least more can be gained by proceeding to act two. The business for the entire play must, at some time, be rehearsed and set. Most directors and writers on directing agree that time can be utilized best if we use the first week of rehearsals for this work, taking the acts in order. If act one is rehearsed for several nights, then act two, and so on, the cast will have grown cold on act one and will have

forgotten a number of things about it, by the time it is rehearsed again.

A satisfactory routine for the first four nights seems to be: act one on the first night; on the second, act two and a review of the movement for act one; on the third, act three and a review of act two; on the fourth, the entire play. In this plan, by the end of the fourth rehearsal, all the movement should be well set for the cast, and the director will have had an opportunity to see, and check up on a walk-through of the important business and movement for the entire play.

We would agree that the first act needs a great deal of rehearsing. A writer has recently stated that in amateur plays the first act is often over-rehearsed, leaving too little rehearsal time for the remaining acts. It is doubtful whether his contention is sound. Ordinarily the director should allow more time for the rehearsal of the first act than for the others, because, not only is the first act generally the longest act, not only are the succeeding acts easier to act because they contain the scenes of action, but the first act is the best act to work on for the establishment of character. If additional time is to be spent on the first act however, it should be during the second or third week of rehearsals rather than at the beginning.

The Second Week

During the first week the actor is learning positions, memorizing lines, and studying character. He continues to memorize during the second week. Also, he devotes more and more thought to his characterization. This order: stage positions, memorization, and characterization may not be the logical order for learning these things; but it is the order which our limited time generally dictates.

During the second week the prompter takes over his duties and the property man assembles the important properties—either the ones which will be used, or dummies.

During the second week the director begins to *direct* his actors.

Now he is able to see in what way this actor's voice falls short of being the voice of the character; he discovers that another actor has not grasped the meaning of the scene; he finds incorrect inflections developing, and wrong reading of lines. He understands that he cannot expect too much from his actors until they are entirely free from their books and can concentrate on character and reading; but he can now explain to them points which would have been meaningless ten days before; he can talk about their characters and suggest ways and means for them to work into character; he can teach and train them for the day, not far off now, when with the background he is giving them they can try, as actors, to play the play.

There are several methods he may use in directing them. He may explain to them in general outline the requirements of the scene, tell them what to do, and let them try to supply the way to do it. Second, he may not only tell them what to do, but explain to them how they can do it. Third, he may even mount the stage and show them how to do it.

It is clear that the more an actor is able to do for himself the more he is learning about acting. The director should, whenever possible, give the actor opportunities to do for himself. But every director recognizes from experience that untrained beginning actors do not know how to do for themselves. This is no criticism, it is a simple, natural fact. If, then, the actor is to fill his proper place in the production, the director must tell him how to do things and may even have to show him how to do them.

Several heads are shaken in disagreement with this last assertion. In it we seem to infer that the actor should be asked to imitate the director and this, our critics say, is wrong. It *is* wrong if we are conducting a course in acting and are teaching acting in the classroom; it is not wrong if we wish to have ready a good play in two or three weeks.

And does any great harm result from this sort of thing? The director tries to explain to the actor what he wants and how he wants it done, and the actor does not understand. So, the director

reads the line himself with the accompanying piece of business. As a result, the actor's eye lights up and he nods his head in understanding. He tries to read the line again and this time with greater success.

The intellectual explanation of the director was not clear, and the visual explanation was. The actor saw and was able to do the thing because he understood. What he did was not an exact imitation of the director. There were points of difference, as there always are.

This explanation, however, should not be looked upon by the director as a justification for "coaching" all his plays and players.

Freedom from the Playbook

Two weeks after the first rehearsal the actors should have memorized all their lines and should be working without their books. In order to accomplish this memorization, the director has to keep reminding his actors, night after night, that on a certain date they must go without their books whether they know all the lines or not. Every director realizes that some actors have to be continually reminded to memorize lines. He should remember, though, that some people memorize easily, others with difficulty. He should also remember that memorization can be accomplished too rapidly. Actors should be allowed time to study the speeches and to think of their meaning as they memorize.

When the time comes (the director has thought it would never come) when the actors are free from their books, a more enjoyable period of rehearsals begins. Now the actors are free to try for character, free to handle props, free to react to one another; now they can create a mood and sustain it as they have not been able to do before. The director, too, is free to suggest and make corrections; and he is justified in demanding more from his actors.

Because the director sees so much that he wants to do, his impulse is to try to do it all at once, to stop the scene continually for corrections, instructions, admonitions. He must remind himself

that the actors cannot remember and obey too many suggestions at one rehearsal. Now and then he should allow a scene to proceed without interruption in order to see what his actors have assimilated and in order to give them an opportunity to feel the scene and to react in and to character.

In other words, he should curb his impulse to do everything and should select certain objectives to work for during a rehearsal: picking up cues, or motivation, or characterization.

This is the time when a few private rehearsals may be necessary for those of his actors who are not getting into character. Both director and actors should anticipate this need and should approach the extra rehearsals without discouragement.

Completing the Production

The play has been memorized, the cast is doing well with characterization, and emotions are beginning to ring true. A new, living quality is coming into the play. Sad to report, some directors, responding to this new quality, consider the play now ready for presentation; or they believe it will be after two or three more rehearsals devoted to speeding up and ironing out the rough spots. It is hard to believe, but it is true, that at this point, when there are a hundred things yet to be done, when his most important and most interesting work should begin, the director sometimes considers his work finished.

The stage play is not yet complete. The actors know their lines, they know when and where to move about the stage, at times they speak in character, the story as they play it is fairly clear; but the average adult could probably read the play and get more from his reading than from the production at this stage of its completion; he should get more from the production; it is the business of the director to give him more.

The play is not a finished product. It needs tightening and sharpening and enriching. It needs variety and pace. It perhaps needs clarity and smoothness and a hundred other things. We call this

the polishing period. The term is too weak and narrow. This is the period when the play, only half finished, needs to be brought to full completion.

We have said that a hundred things need yet to be done. This is not an exaggeration. Let us set down twenty-five of these major and minor tasks, most of which have not been touched upon in the production because they cannot be until the actors are free from their books.

THE FIRST TEN MINUTES OF THE PLAY

The first ten minutes of a play are as difficult as they are important. The audience has to be won from a state of passive receptivity to active participation. If at the end of ten minutes their interest has not been aroused, their minds begin to wander. The first ten minutes, then, should be played to win active interest from the audience. The play determines the definite way in which this should be done; but a strong attack of some sort should be made, and if the author has not supplied the materials for this attack, the director must supply them. Speed, the use of the pause, force, a deep hush, the invention of a piece of dramatic business— something should be found for this difficult and important spot.

PICKING UP CUES

Most actors do not pick up their cues rapidly enough and the play begins to drag. A rehearsal devoted to nothing but the rapid handling of cues is never a waste of time. Often along with more rapid cueing, the pace of the dialogue for much of the play might be speeded up to good advantage. Cues will be discussed more fully in a later chapter.

SIGNIFICANT LINES

Every play contains a number of significant lines and guidepost speeches which direct the audience to something that is going to happen or point out an idea that is important in the interpreta-

tion of the play. We should make everything as clear and easy for an audience as we can. The pointing up of these lines aids in clearness and in interpretation.

INTERRUPTED SPEECHES

Occasionally one speech is left unfinished because another speaker breaks into the speech which is being spoken. This interruption sometimes leaves the first speaker with his mouth open and nothing to say. The result is that the play comes to a momentary halt. The handling of interrupted speeches will be taken up in detail in a later chapter.

FORGOTTEN MEANINGS

During first rehearsals, an actor may speak a line which has a clear meaning for him because he is thinking about it; as he repeats it over and over he stops thinking, the meaning is forgotten, and he is now only saying words. The director, since he has heard the line spoken so often, has also forgotten that it should have a meaning. But the audience will not have heard it before; they need to hear it spoken with meaning. The director would do well to concentrate on the meaning of lines, picking out those which have lost their meaning for the actor, and putting meaning back into them.

CHECKING UP ON PRONUNCIATION

As with meanings, pronunciations sometimes slip. The director's play is not completely ready until the pronunciation of his actors is correct.

IMITATION OF SPEECH RHYTHM

A scene may possess a vocal monotony because one or more actors has unconsciously fallen into the speech rhythm or cadence of another actor. What perhaps has happened is this: one actor, with a strong voice, playing an important part, has adopted a certain rhythm for his speeches; one or more inexperienced actors, unthinkingly have taken up his rhythm and so have re-

duced the scene to a singsong. The actors need to be made conscious of their imitation, and helped in breaking up the repetitious rhythm.

Listening to the Play Without Looking at It

If the director will walk back into the auditorium, turn his eyes away from the stage, and listen to the rehearsal without any help from the visual elements in the acting, he will be able to concentrate on the reading of lines. He will discover lines which lack clarity, distinctness, meaning, and those which cannot be heard. This will give him the knowledge he needs for a good line rehearsal.

The Significant Pause

In the hurry of getting everything else ready, not much attention has been given to the pause. A pause has several dramatic uses. Properly timed and placed, it may add emphasis to a speech, may create suspense, may cue off the audience to a comedy line, may indicate a change in mood or thought. The pause will be discussed fully under a chapter on acting.

Handling Properties

The actors are not wholly prepared to go into a performance until they have had an opportunity to work with all the properties and until they are at ease in handling them. This matter of prop rehearsals should not be slighted, for properties need to be rehearsed the same as lines and movement. Their manipulation needs to be integrated into the speech and action so that they help and do not halt the dialogue.

Checking Stage Business

After the actors have acquired ease in routining the action of the play, the director should check all business and movement. He may find that some piece of business has not worked out so well in fact as it seemed in his imagination; it may now seem out

of character or out of key with the play. The piece of business should now be modified or completely eliminated.

CHECKING ON ACTORS' MANNERISMS

When an actor begins rehearsals he may use a certain mannerism which is neither offensive nor very noticeable. But as his character develops, the mannerism may become a glaring misfit. Often the director, grown accustomed to the gesture or facial expression or vocal peculiarity, may be slow to identify it as the "something wrong" which he senses in the characterization. Once he has discovered the offending habit, he will help the actor to get rid of it.

STRENGTHENING A WEAK CHARACTER

Perhaps, as rehearsals have developed, one actor has not developed sufficient physical or vocal force to dominate a short scene. The director, when he cast him, thought he would be able to do this, but the other actors are now outacting him. It is necessary that for several speeches he become the protagonist and dominate the scene. The resourceful director knows of various devices which may give the actor's character more strength. He may isolate the actor from the others in the scene; he may have him stand on a higher level; he may give him sweeping movements while the others stand motionless; or he may tone down the voices of the other actors so that this actor's voice appears to possess strength and power.

THE ACTOR WHO THINKS ABOUT HIMSELF

One actor may be doing everything as he should, yet the character he is portraying is not getting over, but only the actor trying to play the character. The trouble is that the actor, instead of endeavoring to be the character, is thinking of whether he is doing what the character would do. This happens over and over. The director now has a task on his hands, for he has to change a deep-rooted habit; the actor, somehow, must be made to forget about himself and how he is doing, and must be taught to lose himself in the character.

Checking the Sight Lines

More than one director has heard a member of his audience remark after the play: "But we couldn't see what happened from where we were sitting." The director should check his action from the extreme right and left seats in the auditorium and perhaps from the balcony if he is using stage levels and a low teaser or grand drape. If the people pay their money to see a play, they have a right to see all of it. The director should be sure that all his action will be visible to as large a portion of his audience as is possible.

Suiting Different Action to Different Scenes

The director has been busy with lines, reading, movement, business, characterization. He may have temporarily forgotten that in his play there are different kinds öf scenes such as expository scenes, scenes of preparation, of character revelation, of swift action and climax. Now he remembers them; and he sees that his scenes are being played very much alike. He sets about to give these different scenes their proper style, force, emphasis, and tempo, slowing up those scenes in which the audience must get necessary information, quickening the speed and tension of the scenes of action.

The Transitional Scenes

He also makes a check on the transitional scenes—those scenes which are not dramatic in themselves but which may tie together two scenes which are dramatic. He makes sure that the transitional scenes do not let the interest of the play drop. He may find that he has to play these scenes a little faster or harder or devise a little more movement for them in order to keep them on a dramatic level with the others.

Rehearsing for Smoothness

The director knows that many amateur plays are not smooth-running; they are uncertain and jerky with here and there an

awkward spot which threatens to halt the play. This is because the play has been rehearsed scene by scene, attended by constant interruptions on the part of the director, and halted often for repetition of scenes. Rehearsals have been a matter of one detail after another. In order to counteract the bad effects of this necessary procedure and to insure greater smoothness in performance, he runs through the play once, perhaps twice, just as though an audience were present. The actors stay in character. They cover up any slip without dropping the mood, and the director offers no word of criticism or advice during the rehearsal. He makes numerous notes, however, and after the rehearsal assembles the cast and goes over the notes with them.

THE CLIMAX

Actors have a tendency to go down hill rather than up during the progress of the play. They begin the first act with much vim and enthusiasm, but, by the time they reach the climax in act three, their playing has dropped below the level on which they played the crisis which brought down the curtain on act one. It may not be wholly their fault, for some plays do not possess a dramatically strong climax. The climax, however, should be the emotional peak of the play. No matter where responsibility for weakness lies, the director must work hard to make the climax count. A weak climax causes the audience to leave the theater with a sense of disappointment.

WHEN THE ACTOR IS NOT SPEAKING

Two more bad habits are often apparent in the acting of amateurs. Both are manifested when he is not speaking or being directly spoken to. Many actors have the habit of "acting" in pantomime, shaking the head, pointing, gesticulating, as they follow dialogue in which they have no spoken part. This is the first bad habit. The intentions here may be good, but the effect of this silent overacting is to throw an artificial note into the scene and to direct attention from the dialogue to the actor.

In the other instance, the actor assumes that when he isn't

speaking or being spoken to he is not in the play, therefore he has nothing to do. Not doing anything is almost as bad as doing too much. It lets the play down. It amounts to a desertion of the other actors who are trying to carry on.

As Louis Calvert has told us in *Problems of the Actor*, the arts of listening and of doing nothing are about as important and dif-* ficult as anything an actor will have to learn. The director must become his teacher in this difficult lesson. The first actor we have mentioned has to be taught restraint and brought into the reality of the play. The second has to be taught to concentrate, listen, and react in character. This lesson, incidentally, is good for all actors.

MAKING THE CAST A TEAM

During two or more weeks the emphasis has rightly been on individual reading and characterization and on details or small units rather than on an act as a whole. Before the production is complete, emphasis should be shifted back to the play as a whole, and to the actors as a team rather than as individuals. Each must do his share and no more; each must think of the other characters; each must react to the other characters and cooperate with them.

LOST PERSPECTIVE

Before emphasis can be shifted back to the play, the director and cast may have to regain a lost perspective. Once, they had a clear view of the play, of its central idea and the plan for interpretation. During the rehearsal weeks, this has been obscured by the many details which have engaged the workers. Now it is good policy to take a copy of the book, and forgetting all about what has been done in rehearsals, reread the play in an effort to regain the clear, complete view which once was theirs.

REHEARSING FOR LAUGHS

Let us imagine our inexperienced actors presenting a comedy before an audience. A line or movement brings a good laugh. The actors are startled into silence for a brief moment, then keep right

on speaking, trying to shout their lines above the laugh. But these lines are never heard by the audience.

Comedy is subject to repeated interruptions. The actor must be ready for the interruption and must hold back the next speech until the laugh has subsided. He cannot do this without practice. The director should place a few people in the auditorium (members of the stage crew and several actors not in the scene will do), and ask them to interrupt on the laugh lines. Thus his actors may become accustomed to these interruptions and learn to wait for the laugh to subside. If actors become trained in handling the laugh, they can be depended upon for the routine behavior when a laugh comes at a quite unexpected place.

Timing the Play

The director should know how long the different acts play and how much time he must allow for changes of scenery and costumes. Usually, timing the play does not offer any problem, but now and then he may find that the playing time is overlong, and either the play must be speeded up or the text cut; or he may discover that an actor will not have time to change from one costume to another, and some adjustment will have to be made in costume or text.

Curtain Calls

Curtain calls are, in reality, an unimportant matter and have nothing to do with the success or failure of the play; but they can give a pleasing finish to a performance or become an epilogue full of mix-ups, giggles, and awkwardness, which is not at all in harmony with the play. A ten-minute rehearsal period may be all that is necessary. The actors need to know where they are to be at the final curtain, in what order they are to walk on the stage, and where they are to stand. That is about all.

Some plays permit a continuation of the action after the final curtain. In such a case, the director may vary the conventional curtain call by having the curtain raised and lowered on the actors carrying on the action of their characters.

With the curtain call we have not come to the end of the list of those things which a director may find it necessary to work on if he wishes a complete and well-polished production. Of course, not every play will need all these things done; but all plays will need some of them; and some plays will need others which we have not included.

As a writer, having blocked out his story and written the first draft, now revises his work again and again; as a painter, having blocked out his picture in simple lines and masses, now works it over, adding and toning down color, emphasizing the design, changing slightly the mood; so the director, having blocked out his production in two weeks of work, now should begin to fill out significant details in the production and make his presentation the best his imagination and craftsmanship can devise.

10

DRESS REHEARSALS AND PERFORMANCE

FOR THE past two decades, writers of books on production have been persistently pointing out the folly of a lack of organization and preparedness which make of dress rehearsals a period of complete disorder and long, exhausting hours of work. Their pleas for preparation have been heeded by some, but there still remain amateur groups who are forced, by their directors, to go through these hours of agony.

If the director and his technical assistant have kept consistently at their job, the production should be in a fair state of readiness by the time for dress rehearsals. Scenery should be constructed, painted, and should have been set in place and floor positions marked. Costumes should be in the dressing rooms. Furniture and properties should be in the theater. Lighting should have been decided upon and lighting units made ready. Off stage effects should have been prepared. The entire back stage should be in readiness for dress rehearsals.

There is no virtue in waiting until the first dress rehearsal before scenery, costumes, and effects are used. They should be put to use as soon as they are ready. Costumes may be tried on at some hour when rehearsals are not in progress, adjustments made, and changes timed. The property man and his assistants may be on hand several nights before the dress rehearsal.

Dress Rehearsals

Two dress rehearsals are better than one; three make for a better performance than two. In a three-rehearsal schedule, the first

rehearsal may be turned over largely to the technical director or stage manager. At this rehearsal, scenery can be set up and changed, properties used, off stage effects tried out, and complete lighting attempted. The electrician should be given the privilege of some experimentation during this rehearsal, since he cannot determine definitely his lighting until the stage is in readiness. The director should be in the auditorium and should not halt the play except when absolutely necessary. He may divide his attention between stage and actors, making notes on what is all right and what needs changing. He should offer such criticism as he has to make between acts and after the rehearsal is over. The stage manager should time the rehearsal from the first curtain to the last.

The second dress rehearsal may be given over largely to an examination of costumes and make-up. Between the first and second rehearsals, the electrician, stage manager, and crew have (let us hope) ironed out any rough spots which appeared in the first rehearsal so that their second routine will be smoother and speedier. During this rehearsal the director may concentrate more on his cast and look for any awkwardness which may result from wearing unfamiliar costumes. Again he takes notes. Again he stops the play only when necessary to smooth out some difficulty.

Whatever the order or plan for the first rehearsals, the third should follow completely the routine of a performance before an audience; in fact, a small, invited audience for this rehearsal is the policy of some directors. Theater etiquette and discipline should be maintained. Each actor should be in his proper place: on stage until he has spoken his last line in the act, then in his dressing room until the next act is called. In this rehearsal the play is played through from beginning to end without halts or interruptions.

No actor is at his best when he is physically or nervously exhausted. The last week of rehearsals, even with the best of organization, will prove exhausting. To hold a dress rehearsal on the day of the performance shows very poor judgment. The final rehearsal should come twenty-four, even forty-eight hours before

the play is to be presented. This breathing spell gives the actors time to recuperate and they will not be forced to rely upon their reserve strength to carry them through the performance.

The Night of the Performance

BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

The director has his rôle to play on the night of the performance. An actor is in no spirit to give his best if he walks onto the stage with the naggings and admonitions of a pessimistic director ringing in his ears. On the night of the performance the sensible director will issue no last-minute instructions, he will make no nervous speeches or "pep talks" to his players, reminding them of the crisis they are facing. He should be actor enough to appear self-controlled, good-humored, and light-hearted.

He cannot keep his actors' minds off the play. They will insist upon talking about it. But their remarks should be turned off lightly.

He might as well relax and have as good a time as he can, for if he has not succeeded in preparing the production for the public during his month of intensive work, he cannot transform an unfinished product into a triumph during these last few minutes. A humorous comment on some point in the play is now worth more than a serious discussion of it.

If the director has done his work well and if he has been a good disciplinarian who has won the confidence of his actors, he can relinquish his rôle of director on this night. He can be one with the cast. The actors should feel a sense of ease and comradeship. Giving the play should be a happy experience.

DURING THE PERFORMANCE

Shortly after eight o'clock the stage manager clears the stage and calls "Places!" The play is about to begin.

This word should be said about the hour of starting: when a play is advertised to begin at 8:15, all should be in readiness to begin at 8:15. Of course, the curtain cannot go up while many of

the audience are still coming into the theater. But a stage manager should not keep an audience waiting for a play to start.

Where should the director be during the performance? One place he should not be is back stage running here and there giving instructions to his cast at every opportunity. The logical place for him is out in front watching the play and studying the audience's reaction. He can learn much by sitting with the audience and becoming one of them. He may have some of his theories about how to produce a play verified by the way the audience accepts certain scenes; on the other hand, he may have some of his theories convincingly disproved.

If he does not want to sit out front but prefers back stage, and some directors do, he should be warned again not to make a nuisance of himself. His work is done. The stage is now in charge of the stage manager who ought to be completely capable of handling the routine of the play. The director should find a seat some place where he can hear and observe. And he should remain quiet.

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

Discipline should be maintained and theater behavior practiced after the final curtain has been rung down. The actors should have their costumes in the dressing rooms (or check them with the costume manager), and they should be properly dressed and have all their make-up removed before they leave the theater. Especially is it bad theater etiquette for an actor, with make-up half removed, to go out and sit with the audience after he has finished his part.

Frequently, immediately after the performance is over, friends and interested visitors come back stage. This is not only permissible but pleasant, though stage visits before the beginning of the play should be discouraged. The director, or some representative, should be on hand to greet these people and the stage manager should not seize this opportunity to become the foreman of a labor gang, and, ordering everybody out of the way in a loud voice, begin clearing the stage. He can surely wait ten minutes longer before striking the set.

The stage, however, should not be left in a state of disorder.

This is a natural impulse after a performance. The time for straightening up is after the play and not the next morning. Scenery, properties, lighting equipment, costumes, should all be in their assigned places before the theater is closed.

11

THE LANGUAGE OF THE STAGE

WE HAVE already used a number of words and expressions which may require explanation for the beginning theater worker; we will use more of them later on. Before we turn our attention to the actor, we may as well become familiar with the common terms used in the amateur theater.

Ad lib (*to ad lib*): to compose and speak one's own lines; to make up business for oneself.

Apron: a portion of the stage in front of the proscenium opening, and extending into the auditorium; in old theaters it was used as an acting space.
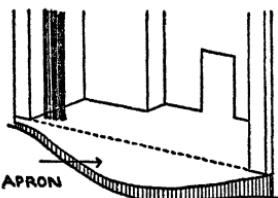
Baby spot: a small spotlight.

Back drop: a large drop, made of canvas, attached to battens, and suspended from the flies at the rear of the stage. It often, though not always, represents the sky.

Backing: a flat, drop, or other piece of scenery, used for masking, and placed behind an opening such as a door or window.

Batten: a long strip, usually of wood, sometimes of iron pipe, hung from the flies in a position parallel to the stage floor, and to which borders, drops, and lights are attached.

Beam light: a spotlight placed in the ceiling towards the rear of the auditorium for the purpose of lighting the downstage area of the stage. It has largely taken the place of the balcony spotlight.

Boomerang: a platform, on wheels or casters, used in painting scenery.

Border: a strip of scenery extending across the width of the stage, fastened to battens, and used to mask the flies and the tops of flats and drops from the audience.

Box set: the interior set of today. Composed of flats joined together and forming three walls of a room. The box set sometimes uses a ceiling.

Brace cleat: a piece of metal attached to the frame of a flat and projecting from it. A stage brace, used to hold up the flat, is hooked into it.

BRACE
CLEAT

Bunch light: a light unit much used before the flood lights and spotlights became popular. It consisted of a bunch of lights grouped close together in a metal or wood reflecting box. It was used for the same purpose as the flood light.

Ceiling: a framework, sometimes hinged, covered with canvas or muslin, suspended by sets of ropes from the flies, resting on the top rails of the box set, and forming a ceiling for an interior scene.

Color frame: a wooden (sometimes metal) frame which holds a color medium and which is placed before flood lights and spotlights.

Corner block: a piece of three-ply plywood, triangular in shape, used to reinforce the corners of pieces of scenery.

Counterweight system: a system for raising and lowering scenery in which the counterweight does most of the work of lifting and lowering, instead of the operator.

Cover (to cover): to stand in front of another actor and hide him from the audience.

Cue: the end of a speech or a piece of business which gives another actor the signal for him to speak or move.

Curtain line: an imaginary line back of the proscenium opening, and extending from side to side of the stage. It designates the line made by the front curtain when it is down.

Cyclorama: at first the word denoted a curved drop, generally representing the sky, suspended at the rear of the stage, and extending around and down the sides; it now denotes a drop, sometimes in folds, often with square instead of rounded corners, and masking the rear and sides of the stage.
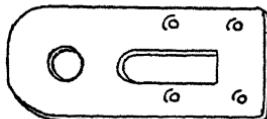
Dim (*to dim*): to decrease the amount of light on the stage by means of dimmers.

Dimmer: a device for changing the flow of electricity through an electrical circuit, in order to change the amount of light.

D.L. or *D.R.:* abbreviations for down left or down right.

Dock: a storage space, as a scene dock.

Downstage: the space towards and near the footlights.

Dressing the stage: a term referring to the disposition of the characters about the stage, generally with reference to keeping the stage balanced.

Drop: a piece of scenery, usually a large piece, attached to a batten at the top, sometimes at the bottom, which can be raised into the flies or dropped to the stage.

Dry brush (*to dry brush*): to paint with a brush that is nearly dry.

Dutchman: a strip of cloth, pasted to the edges of two flats, to cover the crack between them.

Flat: a wooden frame, covered with canvas or muslin, and painted, which forms one of the units of the set, especially of the box set.

Flies: the stage space above and back of the proscenium opening, used for hanging scenery.

Flipper: a small piece of flat scenery which is hinged to a larger piece of flat scenery.

Flood light: one single lamp or a group of lamps set in a box which contains a reflector but no condensing lens, thus causing the light to be diffused over a rather large area.

Floor cloth: a canvas or duck covering for the stage, also called the ground cloth.

Floor plan: a horizontal drawing of the plans of the set, showing the position of the walls, openings, and the location of the furniture and other props.

Floor pocket: an opening in the stage floor in which a box containing electrical outlets is placed.

Fly (*to fly*): to raise scenery into the flies by means of ropes running up to the gridiron.

Fly gallery: a bridge or gallery running along the side wall of the stage, well above the floor, from which the ropes which fly the scenery are operated.

Front of the house: the auditorium portion of the theater in dis-

A - DESK
B - CHAIR
C - PLAQUE
D - CABINET
E - CHAIR
F - TABLE
G - CHAIR
H - CABINET
I - BENCH

SKY DROP

GROUND ROW

LOW PLATFORM

BACKING FOR DOOR
UNDER LANDING STAIR
LANDING EXTENDS OFF-
STAGE, GIVING DOOR
AND ROOM ABOVE FLOOR
LEVEL DOOR AND ROOM

STAIR RUNNING FROM
FLOOR LEVEL UP TO
LIGHT BRIDGE

SKY BACKING
CUTOUT OF ROOMS
OFF THE
TOWER

WALL OF TOWER
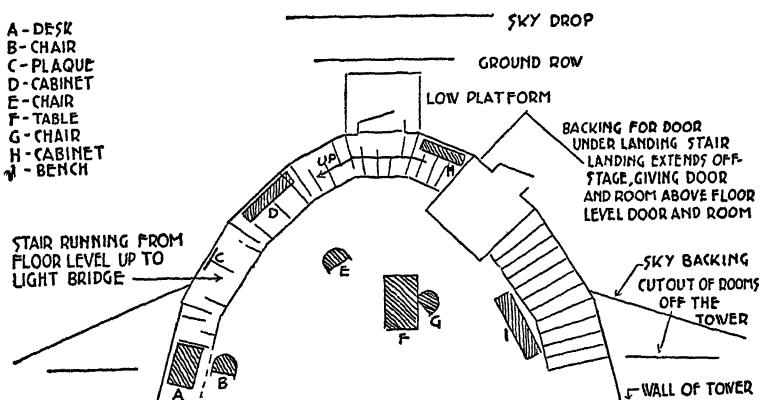
FLOOR PLAN - THUNDER ROCK. SETTING: A LIGHTHOUSE TOWER

tinction from the stage, and separated from it by the pro-
scenium.

Gelatin: a common color medium which comes in sheets.

Give stage: to move away from a position and give it to another
actor.

Grand drape: a curtain
extending the width
of the stage which is
hung just back of the
proscenium opening,
and in front of the
front curtain. It can
be lowered to cut
down the height of
the stage opening.

GRAND DRAPE
TEASER
TORMENTOR
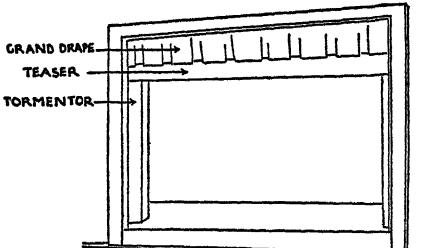
Gridiron or grid: the framework near the ceiling of the stage
which supports the rigging for raising and lowering scenery.

Ground row: a low piece of scenery; a cutout profile of a wall,
bushes, or something which would appear in the middle or
far distance of the scene. It masks the meeting place of the
sky drop with the stage floor.

Hand prop: a small piece or property which is handled by the
actors.

Head block: the three or four sheaves which are generally placed in a line in a frame; the frame is located at the gridiron just
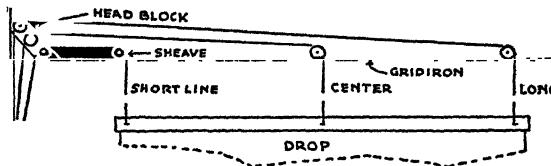
above the pin rail on the fly gallery. It is also called the lead block.

Hold: a director's command meaning to suspend speech and action.

In one: a relic from the days when the stage was divided into different spaces by the pairs of wings. "In one" was the space between the first pair of wings and the back drop behind them. It now designates the acting space, five or six feet deep, just upstage from the curtain line.

Jack: a wooden frame, triangular in shape, hinged to a set piece or a ground row, and supporting it in an upright position.

Jog: a very narrow flat.

Lash (to lash): to bind two flats together edgewise with a lash line.

Lash cleat: a small metal projection attached to the frame of a flat, over which the lash line is thrown when one flat is bound to another.
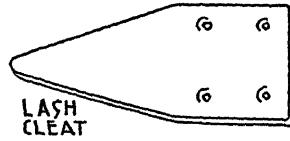
Lash line: the rope, either sash cord or clothesline, which is used for binding the flats together.

Left stage: the left side of the stage from the actor's standpoint.

Leg drop: a narrow painted drop, representing a pillar, tree, or such, which is dropped to the stage from the flies.

Light plot: a chart which diagrams or explains the lighting of a play or the act of a play.

Loft block: a sheave on the gridiron used to run a fly rope.

Mask (to mask): to conceal from the audience.

Off stage: not off the stage, but outside the playing area.

A,A'- SMALL FLOODS ON SKY BACKING
B,B'- SMALL FLOODS ON CUTOUTS
C- FIRST BORDER
D- CROSS SPOTS ON DESK
E- CROSS SPOTS ON TABLE
F- CROSS SPOTS ON BENCH
G- SPOT ON STAIR DOOR
H,H'- STRIP LIGHTS BEHIND UPPER AND LOWER DOORS
I- SPOT ON DOOR
J,J'- FLOODS ON SKY DROP

LIGHT SET-UP~THUNDER ROCK - ACT ONE
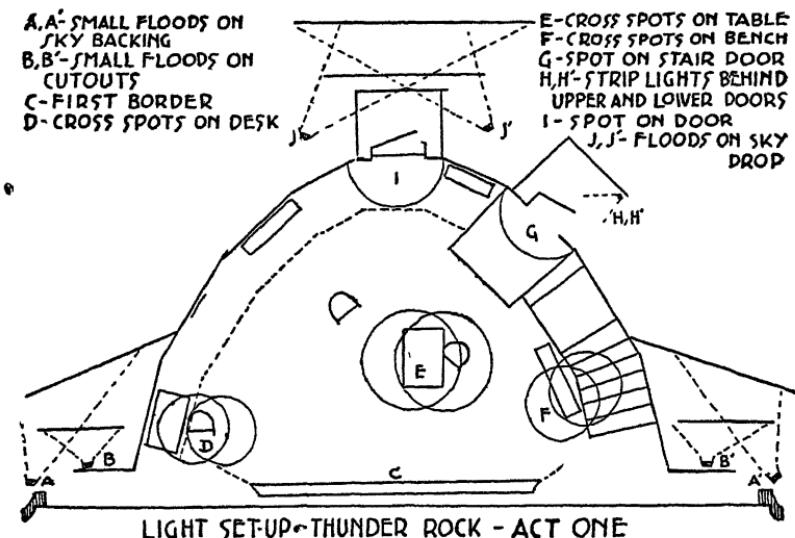
Olivette: a flood light containing but one lamp of high wattage; usually mounted on a stand.

On stage: inside the playing area.

Permanent set: one set which, with minor changes and additions, will serve for the several settings in the play.

Pin rail: the rail, or fly gallery, which holds the pins to which the fly ropes are tied.

Plastic: the word refers to a piece of scenery built in three dimensions rather than in the conventional two, on which the third dimension is suggested through painting.

Playing space: the stage space within or without the set, visible to the audience, and used for acting during the play.

Practical: something which is usable. A practical door is one which can be used as a real door is used.

Projection: an acting term referring to throwing the voice out or making clearly visible a piece of business.

Prop plot: a chart or floor plan showing the setting and the disposition of all properties used in the set.

Proscenium: accurately, that part of the stage in front of the curtain; ordinarily the word denotes the stage opening behind which the curtain is hung.

OFF STAGE ON TABLE:
GUN AND CLOTHS
RADIO
SACKS AND BOXES OF
PROVISIONS
BRIEF CASE

IN CABINET H-WHISKEY BOTTLE
AND GLASSES; ON H-LANTERN,
BOOKS. IN CABINET D-BOOKS,
SMALL BOXES; ON D- OIL
LAMP. ON DESK A- PAPERS,
OIL LAMP, ACCOUNT BOOKS,
ETC ON TABLE F -ASH
TRAY, BOOK. AT J-
FLICKER ON HOOK.

PROP TABLE

PROP LIST - ACT ONE - THUNDER ROCK
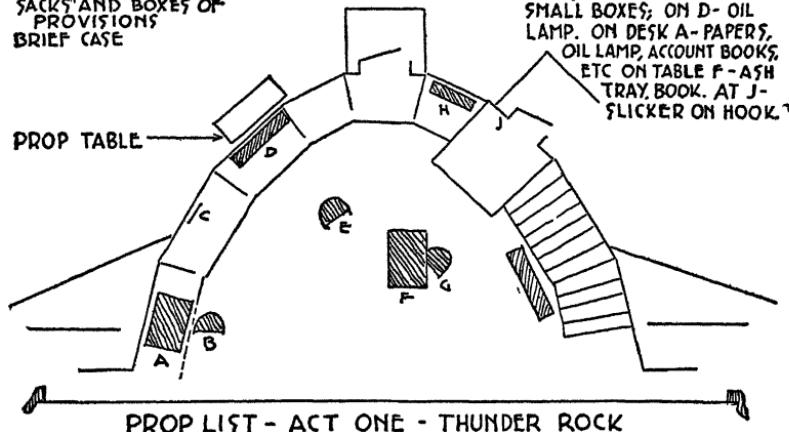
Rake: to set on a slant.

Ramp: an inclined platform, sloping up from the level of the stage.

Return: a flat, attached to the downstage edge of the scenery wall, and extending the wall off stage at approximately right angle. It is behind and parallel to a tormentor.

Right stage: the right side of the stage from the actor's standpoint.
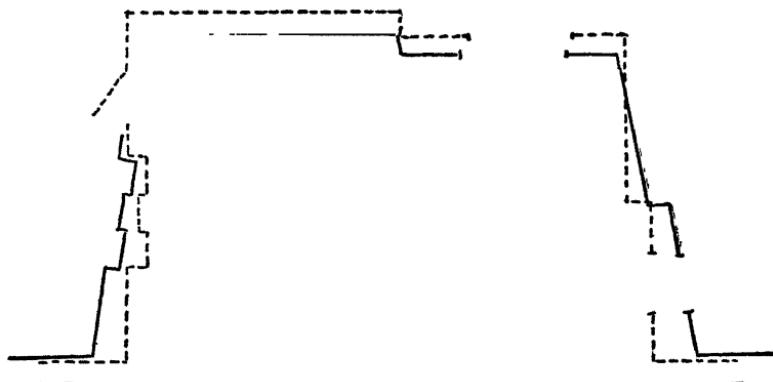
FLOOR PLAN OF SET WHICH IS RAKED
DOTTED LINE SHOWS SET WHEN NOT RAKED

Scene plot: a chart or diagram which shows how the stage is to be set.

Set or setting: a group of flats or other scenery units which, when arranged on the stage, represent or suggest a certain place or locality.

Set piece: a piece of scenery, generally three-dimensional, which stands without bracing.

Set props: those props which are distinguished from hand props; the benches, tables, pictures, and other furnishings which are in the set when the curtain rises.

Set (*to set,* or *to set stage*): a command given the stage crew and meaning to prepare completely the stage for the scene which is to be performed.

Sheave: a pulley wheel; in the theater, those pulley wheels on which the fly ropes run.

Shift: a command meaning to remove one set and place on the stage another.

Short line or *short:* in each set of lines or fly ropes, the rope nearest the pin rail is the short; the one in the middle, the center; the one farthest from the pin rail, the long.

Sides: a cutting of the play in which the actor has been given his lines and only the cue lines of the other actors.

Snap line: a piece of cord, well chalked, which is held taut and snapped; a bow snap line can be operated by one man; the snap line is used for laying out lines on scenery.

Strike: a command meaning to take down and remove the set and properties from the stage.

Strip light: a strip of lights set in a reflecting trough and used above doors and windows and any place where a small area of diffused light is needed.

Tab: similar in construction and operation to a big drop, but used chiefly for masking small areas, such as the stage space behind a window.

Take stage: to move to a certain position.

Teaser: a scenery border, suspended from the flies just back of the front curtain, and used to mask from the audience the light borders, sky borders, and front edge of the ceiling. It can be raised or lowered to vary the height of the stage.

Throw: a light term; the distance from the lamps to the area to be illuminated.

Toggle: a cross brace in the frame of a flat.

Top (*to top*): to begin a speech with higher pitch or greater force than the preceding one.

Tormentors: a pair of flats, downstage on either side, movable, and used to mask a part of the wings and to vary the width of the stage opening.

Tormentor light: a light located just upstage from the tormentor.

Trap: a trapdoor located in the floor of the stage.

Traveler: a track, used in the manipulation of draw curtains.

Trim (*to trim*): to level off, parallel to the stage and at the desired height, a piece of scenery such as a border.

Two-fold: two flats hinged to fold together inward; three-fold; three hinged flats.

Upstage: away from the footlights.

Unit set: somewhat similar to a permanent set, but more flexible. Various scenery units which can be put together in different combinations to form different settings.

U.L. or *U.R.:* abbreviations for up left or up right.

Wagon: a low platform on wheels or casters, on which a large section of a set may be rapidly wheeled into place.

Wing pieces: two-fold flats, set in pairs on each side of the stage, representing a part of the set and masking the sides of the stage.

Wings: the space, outside the acting area, at right and left stage.

Wing setting: a setting composed of wing pieces and a back drop.

X: a written abbreviation meaning to cross stage.

12

THE ACTOR'S ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

It has been remarked more than once that the weakest spot in our productions is our actors; and the reason for this weakness is that just when a student begins to learn how to act, he graduates. Our acting material is constantly changing.

If this were not discouraging enough in itself, we have also to recognize that acting is the most difficult of all the tasks associated with the theater; it is the most difficult to understand, to talk about, to teach, and to learn. Thus far in this book we may have shown an unappreciative, unsympathetic attitude towards the actor since we have called him an uncertain quantity and have questioned his capabilities. This attitude has been due to no lack of appreciation of the beginning actor's intelligence, willingness, or capacity for improvement, but to the realization that his task is difficult and to the recognition that as a beginner he is not ready to contribute greatly to the creation of the play.

For a time we will turn our attention directly to the actor and his elusive, difficult task, hoping that what we will have to say may help the teacher-director in his teaching of acting and the amateur actor in learning to act.

Acting

What is this thing called acting?

Acting is not simply imitation for imitation generally possesses little depth or power and impresses us with its artificiality. It is not recitation, no matter how beautiful and moving is the flow of language in the recitation. It is not gesture and posture, no

matter how graceful or powerful or rhythmic are the lines and movements of the body. It is not behaving naturally on the stage, otherwise we would be thrilled more often by the natural behavior we see about us every day. On the other hand, behaving unnaturally does not give us acting. It is not deception, for deception can never become an art, and acting is sometimes an art. It is not illusion, and it is not just living the externals of the life of the character which is being portrayed.

It is easy enough to say what acting is not; it is far from easy to say what acting is.

A person goes to the theater, sees a piece of acting, is impressed, and declares with sincerity and finality, "That is good acting." What does he mean? He may mean "that actor gave me a convincing illusion of life"; or "that actor, in truth, became an integrated unit in the larger unit of the play"; or "that actor gave me a thrill"; or "that actor revealed to me all that the dramatic situation contained"; or "that actor went beyond mere illusion and gave me the *idea* of the character"; or (if he recently has had a course in acting) "that actor used his voice and body in the best and most effective theater manner."

In other words, acting is not one thing but many. The purpose of acting under certain times and conditions may be to convey to an audience the emotional life of a character; or to dominate our minds and emotions and give us a revelation which is hidden from us in the printed play; or to give us the sensuous pleasure which all art gives us.

A million words have been written on the subject of acting and we are just about where we started. A dozen directors may have a dozen theories about acting, and all of them may work, or none of them at all. Another director with no theory whatsoever may produce a well-acted play. So where are we? At least we are in an interesting subject for speculation. Because acting cannot be analyzed, because we cannot reduce it to one theory and ascribe to it one method, it is embarrassing for a writer who wishes to say something helpful on the subject; but the subject still remains important and challenges our interest.

As beginning actors, it is unnecessary for us to worry over the theory of acting and to search for its soul, for we will have great difficulty in discovering these things, if we discover them at all. It is equally futile for us to try to understand the art of acting. All we could hope to do through our research is to reduce the art of acting to words which, perhaps, would express vague ideas in abstract statements, statements which would leave us in nearly as much darkness as before.

Even if it is futile to puzzle over the soul of acting and its fundamental theories, we should not dismiss from our minds the idea that in the theater of today we have a definite task to perform and the performance of this task can be studied.

This task is to put man face to face with himself, or, to put the man in the audience face to face with something in himself in the character on the stage. To accomplish this, the actor has to do something more than imitate nature. He has to use and stress symbols which *seem* to express what the stage character feels— symbols which, although they may be contemporary conventions, are accepted and understood by the man in the audience. Or, more briefly, an actor today is asked to interpret through his voice, body, spirit, and personality, a character so convincingly that the man in the audience accepts the character as a living reality.

Such things as voice, body, and spirit, then, are the materials through which the actor conveys character and represents emotion. These are the things which may be studied and trained and put to service on the stage. When we study them in respect to their stage service, we study the craft of acting. And although the art of acting cannot be learned from books, something of the craftsmanship may; and craftsmanship, as we will agree, is fundamental to good and even great acting. Many people may be trained sufficiently in the craftsmanship of acting to give a creditable character impersonation.

Yet, other people may not be so trained. Body and voice are not quite all that are needed. Before the beginner takes up the study of acting he should be told what the important prerequisites are, and he should ask himself if he possesses them.

The Actor's Materials

The actor's medium of expression is his body. For good expression he must possess a normal physical mechanism and a normal voice; beyond body and voice he should have an attractive personality, a theater sense, and imagination; and if he hopes to learn to act, he must not be afraid of hard work.

A NORMAL BODY

If the actor is physically handicapped, he is almost sure to fail. He needs a strong, normal body, responsive and under his control. The body can be trained, can become responsive and expressive. The important point at first is that it shall be in no respect defective.

Common departures from the normal are very short legs, fat or very thin bodies, tall, angular frames. In most cases, though not in all, young people with such shortcomings should be persuaded not to take up acting.

Exceptional departures, such as a withered arm or club foot, offer handicaps so great that they cannot be overcome even though the individual may possess other gifts in abundance.

A NORMAL VOICE

Fortunately most young people have normal bodies capable of training and development; fortunately most of their speech organs are normal. If, however, the acting candidate finds that his occlusion is abnormal, his vocal chords too long or too short, his palate cleft, or if he discovers that tonsils or adenoids are hindering his speech, then he first should consult a physician and only upon a physician's advice should he consider a course in voice training.

On the other hand, if he finds that his voice is unpleasantly high, not because of abnormally short vocal chords but because of stage fright or some other form of nervousness; if he learns that his voice is thin and shrill because he is employing incorrect breathing methods; if he "talks through his nose" because he is

not using vocal resonance; in short, if his voice is just an average voice which bad habits have impaired, he can, with the assistance of a trained director, diagnose his simple difficulties and undertake to eradicate them.

ꞏ AN ATTRACTIVE PERSONALITY

Personality is not a simple thing like a high-pitched voice or a visible thing like an arm gesture. It includes character and mind and the emotional nature which together have grown into something distinct and individual, something which attracts or repels. We have a strong wish to like our actors; therefore, they should reveal an attractive personality.

If the actor possesses an attractive personality, he can play any kind of character and we will still respond to him; he will establish a bond of sympathy, or at least a bond of sympathetic understanding between himself and his audience. In other words, the actor himself, quite apart from the character he is playing, should possess some qualities of charm and magnetism which are always felt by the audience. An actor, even in a college or high school play, who radiates no warmth and "heart," who possesses no charm, who creates no bond of sympathy or interest between himself and his audience, will not be popular with his audience.

A self-analysis which would reveal to the young actor whether or not he is projecting charm and magnetism would be impossible. If he is sensitive (and he should be), he may in some way be able to discover whether the audience does or does not respond to him. Most directors hesitate to tell a student that he is deficient in personality, though they would be doing him a service by making him aware of his shortcoming.

A THEATER SENSE

Just as the mechanic has a special knack for handling tools and putting things together, so the actor has a special kind of sensitiveness for his stage, his character, and his audience.

The actor might catechize himself as follows: "When I walk out onto a stage to rehearse, do I instinctively behave, or wish to

behave, according to the rules and conventions which are not operative in ordinary life? That is, do I behave differently just because I am on the stage?" Second, he might ask, "Am I responsive to the character I am to play, and does he seem to want to take possession of me?" And third, "When I am rehearsing, am I responsive to an imaginary audience which affects my playing?" If he is conscious of these responses, he may assure himself that he possesses a good theater sense. For the actor is affected by these three forces: by the physical stage upon which he is acting, by the character he is portraying, and by the imaginary audience before whom he is playing.

The beginner need not have this three-fold sense strongly developed. Even in experienced actors one part of this sense is frequently more active than another part. We can imagine a good actor whose work is clear and effective, who possesses little of the stage sense but a great deal of the sense for character. The candidate should be certain that he possesses some of this three-fold sensitiveness. It will be a useful part of his acting equipment.

IMAGINATION

A quality some of us are likely to overlook is imagination. The literal-minded, phlegmatic performer, the man of placid spirit who sees no more than his own lines and who does no more than his director tells him to do, is usually a poor actor. At least he is an annoying actor with whom to work.

The actor with imagination will, first of all, enjoy acting more because he has more capacity for enjoyment and because he can live more vividly and completely his character. He will be able to visualize his character in situations other than those in the play; he will be able to fill out the part, enrich it, add details, and make it more complete and convincing. Lastly, he will be able to work by himself and not be dependent upon his director for every movement and every phrasing.

It is hopeless to try to develop an imagination in someone who has no imagination to start with; but it is possible to stimulate a dormant imagination into action. Whether we find it in the actor,

the mechanical engineer, or the clever thief, imagination may be made of the same stuff; but the actor puts his imagination to work in his own way in his own field. He gives it freedom in translating the play to the audience through the medium of his own body. Through usage, the imagination becomes more fertile and trustworthy. Eventually the actor grows more creative and becomes a joy to his director.

A WILLINGNESS TO WORK

We have listed the important prerequisites for acting; yet we cannot refrain from warning the prospective actor that even though he is well supplied with the materials for acting, it will be necessary for him to work hard.

Acting frequently demands physical endurance, mental concentration, expenditure of emotional and nervous energy. More than once an actor finds himself in a state near complete exhaustion. The beginner who approaches the task of acting with the belief that it is an easy pastime will be disagreeably surprised. The task of reliving five, ten, twenty years of emotional life in two hours, and living it so that the cumulation of the years' joy or pain is visible to the audience, is not a simple, and certainly not a light task.

An actor must agree to work hard if he is to create character, represent the emotion of a scene, build up the dramatic crises; he must be willing to rehearse a scene again and again, day after day; and he must know that he has the capacity for difficult, repetitious work.

The prospective actor, as he examines himself for these prerequisites for acting, may make his decision on the six points we have listed: a normal body, a voice which is not defective, an ability to project a pleasing personality, a theater sense, imagination, and a capacity for hard work. If he is in possession of these attributes and instincts, he may assure himself that he has passed his entrance examination.

He is now justified in undertaking this work in which he professes so much interest. His materials may, as yet, be in no condi-

tion for theater use. His next step is to put them in condition. The two chapters which follow will be devoted to the conditioning of the body and voice; in the third we will consider what can be done about personality, the theater sense, and the imagination.

13

THE BODY IN ACTING

THE DRAMA of the twentieth century is much more dependent upon visual acting for its interpretation than was the drama of the nineteenth century. An audience now watches an actor closely, for we have come to expect that what he does will tell us things as clearly as what he says. The actor's body is now a significant instrument of expression.

The school authorities of the twentieth century have been more concerned with physical education and bodily health than were their forbears of the nineteenth century. In consequence, our young men and women have better and more useful bodies than their grandparents had.

There is probably no causal relationship between interest in physical education and interest in visual acting; but since the actor's body has become something which an audience watches, it is fortunate that his body is a more usable instrument of expression than it was formerly.

Bodily Qualities of the Actor

We begin with the question: what bodily qualities are most applicable to the work of acting?

VITALITY

The actor needs a body which, on the stage, becomes alert and alive. Good health has something to do with the vitality of the body, but not everything; the same is true of physical exercise. A

visible vitality is also dependent upon a sense of life within the actor which is so strong that it is expressed through the body.

Perhaps we have watched several actors at work on a play. One has a quiet part with little movement, yet we say of him, "he is alive"; another may move about the stage a great deal but our comment is, "he is dead." We are commenting on this physical aliveness, this vitality which becomes a visible force.

Poise

The actor needs poise. Poise is neither effeminate nor weak. It gives the impression of physical mastery. The actor who possesses it puts us at ease because there is nothing rigid or unbalanced in his physical appearance. Poise suggests a complete and continuous balance.

In acting, poise is utilitarian. The actor with poise is able to walk, stand, stoop, turn, kneel, rise, and give each of these movements strength and interest. Poise has an aesthetic effect as well. Because there is no awkwardness, uncertainty, or weakness in the movement, the onlooker has the pleasant sensation which such balanced movement produces.

Grace

Grace in posture suggests ease, attractiveness, and curves rather than angles; in motion it suggests an easy flow from one position of rest to another. A graceful body tends to create a pleasant sense of ease in the spectators; an ungraceful one induces a sense of discomfort.

Strange as it may seem upon first thought, the graceful body is able to express clumsiness and lack of grace in a more satisfactory manner than the ungraceful body. The experienced actor cultivates grace, for he knows how often it is desirable and effective in his stage movements.

Responsiveness and Control

Most of all, the actor needs a body which has been trained to respond to the demands of stage behavior. A young actor some-

times asks, "What shall I do with my hands?" If his body is responsive to the character he is playing and to the emotion through which the character is passing, his hands will respond naturally to the character and the emotion; they will hang weakly at his sides, or be thrust into his pockets, or stiffen and clench, or wander aimlessly over his coat lapels. A trained actor will find no reason to ask this question of his director.

Along with this natural tendency to respond bodily should come a bodily control and mastery. Unrestrained or uncontrolled bodily expression tires and confuses an audience. The actor should have the instinct and will to direct bodily language at all times.

The Amateur's Bodily Expression

Unfortunately our emphasis on physical education has not yet produced young men and women with sufficient poise, grace, and bodily response and control (for our women are deficient in these qualities as well as our men). If a director were to take a group of women students, chosen at random, and put them through a series of exercises to test their poise, grace, responsiveness and control, he would be likely to find that the majority were awkward and unresponsive. Let the director test this assertion by asking each of a group of girls to walk across the stage in the character of a story-book queen. It may be a revelation to the girls as well as to the director to find how few can walk with the poise and control which we associate with the regality of the queen of fiction.

The failure of the students to meet this test generally stems from one of two causes. First, the body itself may be deficient in coordination and expressive power. In this case the student, if he wishes to act, has to begin training his body through gymnastics, fencing, and dancing. The other cause, which happily is much more common, lies in his inability to use effectively what he already possesses. He does not know how to do what is asked of him. In this case, the teacher-director may be of service to him.

The teacher might ask a boy to walk across the stage and kneel

before a king. If the actor does not know how to make his body speak its language, he is apt to walk, bend at the waist, bend the knee, and duck the head. This is what he does and this is what comes over to the spectator. There is no harmony between the thing to be done and the bodily expression. What we get here is a series of movements. What the teacher wants is one continuous movement which is the expression of an idea.

He now tells the student that bodily expression should be an expression of the mind and spirit; he asks the student to begin with the idea. In this case it may be that of a young nobleman advancing under more or less romantic circumstances to pay grateful homage to his respected sovereign. The boy must visualize this situation and feel it. The first attempt may be unsuccessful. After some thinking and imagining he tries again; and this time his action expresses (imperfectly, of course) not so much the picture of a twentieth-century sophomore walking across the stage and bending in two or three places, as the idea of romantic youth performing a service of homage.

The amateur actor, as a rule, possesses the necessary physical equipment. Granted a normal body with some responsiveness, the problem of making it an instrument of effective expression is not serious if he brings his mind and imagination to bear on the task before him.

The Language of the Body

The actor must learn to use a bodily language. He may find it helpful to think of the different parts of the body as they form the words of this language.

The head may be held straight on the neck, may be tilted back, bent forward, or inclined to one side.

The eyebrows may be normal, raised, lowered, or contracted.

The eyes may be normal, staring, squinting, drooping, half closed, closed.

The lips may be curved in a smile, drawn into a sneer, pressed together, opened, drawn into a thin line; the lower lip may be

held between the teeth or may hang loosely and protrude from the face.

The jaw may be firm, loose, or thrust forward.

The shoulders may be held erect, may be relaxed or thrown back; they may sag, or one shoulder may be raised higher than the other.

The arms may hang loose from the shoulders, may be carried close to the body or away from it, may hang awkwardly, gracefully, relaxed, or tense, may be bent at elbow or wrist or hang straight.

The wrists may be stiff or hang free.

The hands may be held close to the body or away from it, relaxed or tense, palms out or palms in, palms up or down.

The fingers may be wide apart, close together, crooked like a claw, curved, lifeless, or stiff.

The legs may be carried straight, knocked-kneed, bowed, spread apart, or with a break at the knees.

The feet may be firmly or lightly planted, toed in, toed out, far apart or close together; and they may support the weight of the body on the toes, balls of the feet, or heels.

Everyone knows these things; every student knows that he can do these things with his body; but not every director or actor realizes that these are the words out of which dramatic words and phrases are made; not every beginning actor sees in these simple physical positions the elements of a symbolic language which, with a little practice, he may be able to speak clearly enough to be understood.

Let us go a step further. Let us select one part of the body, the hands, and, by combining their positions with movements, form simple sentences. The movement, it will be seen, corresponds roughly to the verb in the written sentence.

The hand, outstretched, palm up, fingers closed, says, "I tell to you"; the hand moved forward, palm down, says, "I deny it"; the hand moved towards the body, fingers closed, "I am hiding it"; the hand forward, fingers outstretched, "I ask of you";

the hand relaxed and moving, palms down with fingers curved, "I caress you"; the hand in motion, back of hand outward, fingers extended, "I ignore you"; the hand at side, fingers clenched, "I hate you" or "I will get even with you."

Let us move on again, this time into a situation in a play. The setting and dialogue are as follows:

The scene represents a room; there is a doorway center back; two people are in the room, Mitchell and Chalmers; someone approaches the doorway.

> MITCHELL: Who's there?
> (*Mrs. Tupy appears in the doorway*)
> MRS. TUPY: (*looking slowly about*) I didn't want to come. . . . I wouldn't have come only——
> MITCHELL: (*motionless*) What can we do for you?
> MRS. TUPY: (*advancing towards him*) You can . . . you can . . . (*her voice fades*) I didn't want to come here——

This is what the playwright has provided for the actors; what now follows is what the actors do and say through their bodies.

Mrs. Tupy stands in the doorway. The actress playing the part bends her head forward; her half-closed eyes shift from Chalmers to Mitchell; her shoulders are drawn inward; her arms hang limp, her hands seem heavy and are held, one above the other, slightly touching, against her stomach; there is a break in her body in the pelvic region; her knees are bent; her feet, toed in slightly, are some distance apart. The posture of the actress' body speaks the sentence, "I am a poor, weak, tired old creature."

She faces Mitchell as he speaks. He stands with his body straight, his head erect, his feet slightly apart, his eyes open but not staring, his face calm; a hand moves to his chin and he rubs it gently with his thumb. So this actor by his posture and movement says, "I have no sympathetic interest in you but I am wondering about you."

The actress playing Mrs. Tupy now walks towards the actor

playing Mitchell. She walks with a dragging step, her feet well apart; she proceeds slowly, her head swaying slightly. So she reiterates, "I am old and I am tired."

She starts to speak, utters a few words, then one hand drops limply to her side; the other hand, remaining against her body, has its thumb relaxed in the palm; her head rolls slowly, slightly, then drops forward; the upper lids cover the iris of the eyes; the body slumps farther down on the hips. With this movement she tells us, "I am so very, very tired."

In this exposition we are again revealing nothing new to the actor. He already knows that pantomime is a part of the language of the stage, that an entire play may be revealed through its effective use. But though he knows this, when he is given lines to speak, he does not always think of how he can clarify, interpret, and enrich the spoken dialogue through his bodily language. Many amateurs, if they were given the above four speeches to speak, would not realize that they have here the opportunity to say with their bodies so much more than is in the speeches themselves.

The amateur may know, but he does not realize sufficiently for practice, that characterization, thought, and emotion can and should be expressed through posture and movement. He must remember that his body may tell us whether the character is young or old, whether his background is one of wealth or poverty, refinement or vulgarity; it may even suggest, by the position of the hands, the movement of the shoulders, the many or few hand gestures, the race to which the character belongs; and besides these external and obvious characteristics, bodily languages may subtly reveal the nobility or meanness, the depth or shallowness of the character's thoughts, and may express more swiftly than voice his emotions of fear, anger, awe, happiness, or loneliness.

And, even more important, though he knows some of these things, the actor does not always realize that, when the playwright has written his dialogue and his stage directions for interpretation and movement, his part of the task is finished; but that much is yet to be added before the play is ready to be seen as well as

heard by the audience; that this addition must be provided by the actor and his director. The actor can, in adding this visible speech, become a creator just as the writer is a creator; and at times his bodily speech may be as dramatic, as revealing, or as brilliant as the lines of the author.

Examples of Bodily Language

It would be futile to attempt to set down, all or a majority, of the definite ways in which the body, under the conventions accepted today, may express emotion or character. A short list however, should acquaint the student actor with the possibilities for expression and should start his imagination on a search for other combinations of posture and movement which have definite interpretive connotations for an audience.

Good feeling is expressed by erect posture, head up, and chin out. If a cast is made to go through a scene with heads up and chins out, a definite impression of good humor and optimism is communicated to the audience.

Mental depression is suggested by half-closed eyes, a relaxed body, drooping shoulders, lifeless arms, and limp hands.

Fear may be expressed by having the actor stand with one foot in advance of the other, the weight of the body resting on the rear foot, one hand raised across the body, palm down, with fingers spread and slightly bent; chest back, head slightly down and forward, eyes wide, and lips slightly parted.

Anger under control is interpreted through the feet planted firmly and slightly apart, hands low and tightly clenched, chin slightly forward, mouth tightly closed, eyebrows contracted, lips slightly parted.

Defiance tenses and straightens the body; the feet are planted firmly, arms slightly tense, hands at sides with fingers beginning to curve, head back, lips closed, eyes open.

Surrender relaxes and droops the body; the head moves forward and downward, the palms of the hands are turned up, with the fingers open.

The actor who is interested may go on from here, analyzing the bodily reaction to other emotions such as uncontrolled anger, dejection, revulsion, surprise, grief, reverence.

Age has its bodily expression. An old person's body is not erect; he stands with his feet wider apart than a young person; age generally breaks the body of a man across the shoulders and the body of a woman in the pelvic region; eyesight grows dim and the head may be thrust forward and the eyes squinted; the hands are rarely clenched and are open, relaxed, with the fingers more or less curved. In movement the aging body is slow and careful. When the old person sits he slumps, falls, or slides into a chair. Such a person often thinks of his body before he uses it.

Convalescents also are cautious in the use of their bodies. Sickness slows up bodily reaction and the whole body is relaxed and quiet except in the areas of the head and hands which do most of the speaking. The lips may be used freely; especially characteristic is the "wan smile" which is unaccompanied by the movement of other muscles of the face. The hands, moving from the wrists and not so much from elbows or shoulders, may be in constant motion.

The interested student may again carry on from here, working out the physical posture and movement for the athlete, the farmer who has lived out of doors, the middle-aged sedentary worker, and any other types of character which strike his fancy.

Remember, we aren't acting yet; we are only becoming acquainted with one instrument for acting, we are only learning what we are to use when we start to act. And remember also that it will not be as simple as saying, "I'm going to play an old man, so I'll slump my shoulders, shuffle my feet, walk with my legs apart, stick my head forward and squint, and I'll be all right." The actor has to know the particular character and his particular physical condition, thoughts, and feelings. There must be a harmony between the physical on the one hand and the mental and spiritual on the other. There must be a reason within the character for all posture and movement.

Common Faults in Bodily Expression

Turning back to the beginning actor, whom we deserted for a discussion of the language of the body, let us examine him as he uses and misuses his body on the stage.

STANDING

The majority of our amateurs approximate a correct standing position; a disturbing minority do not. This minority stand on one foot, then the other, pushing one knee forward, the other backward, and presenting anything but a graceful picture; or they stand with their spines curved and their stomachs thrust forward; or they stand with sagging shoulders and caved-in chests.

WALKING

Amateurs may likewise be divided into those who can walk and those who get there somehow but not by a method of correct or graceful locomotion. In this case, the incorrect performers seem to be in the majority. They shuffle, waddle, jump, fall forward; they follow their stomachs; they set their eyes on an object and go for it with head and shoulders thrust forward.

Sarah Bernhardt, the French actress, once declared that the wrong idea animates people in walking; that our thought is fixed on the objective, and in consequence we thrust our heads forward and follow our heads. She suggested that in order to make our walking more beautiful and correct, we should pretend that there is a buoyant breeze at our own backs, blowing against our shoulders; and, with this in mind, we seem to lean against the breeze and allow ourselves to be propelled forward.

This is a rather lyric exposition of the act of walking. E. B. Colvin, a professional director, says it more prosaically when he admonishes to lead with the upraised chin rather than the stomach, to move the hips and knees, and to think of walking as correct posture in motion.

SITTING

Many amateurs, when they sit in a chair, sit far forward with their shoulders against the back of the chair. Instead of this, let the actor sit upright with his hips, not his shoulders, touching the back of the chair and with his feet firmly on the floor. He will find that by sitting in this position he can control any nervousness more easily, he has freed the entire upper portion of his body for expression, and he is in a position which permits him to rise without taking one or more intermediary positions. His body has been made more effective.

THE BODY EXPRESSIONLESS THROUGH INACTION

A fault of most actors is that they do not use the body enough; they neglect this valuable instrument of expression. The purpose of most of this chapter has been to convince the actor that this is true and urge him to remedy the fault.

THE BODY AND MEANINGLESS MOVEMENT

If actors are not inactive, they are often indulging in a great deal of meaningless movement. They walk back and forth between a table and a chair ten times in a short scene (we have watched an actor make as many as twenty such round trips) and the walk is never in character, never motivated. They adopt some gesture such as throwing the hand out from the body for emphasis and use the gesture over and over until it is monotonous and completely void of meaning.

Gesture and movement are good; they should be encouraged; but there must be a reason for them in the character and his emotions, otherwise they are valueless or actually harmful to the scene.

Training the Body through Pantomime

The easiest and simplest way for the school amateur to train his body for better expression is through the practice of pantomime. He can practice pantomime in the classroom or in his

own home. This practice frees the body, makes for greater precision in posture and movement, coordinates the parts of the body; it also trains the actor to think of significant details, and it is a good exercise for the imagination.

In pantomime the actor uses no properties except such necessary furniture as chairs and tables; everything else is imagined. There is no pantomiming of dialogue. The action proceeds, not as though the pantomimist were dumb, but as though there were no necessity for words on his part. Effective pantomime may result from listening and reacting to the imagined speech of the imaginary characters in the pantomime.

The actor might begin by choosing one of the following exercises which offer variety in character, emotion, and mood:

The actor is a shop girl or a young professor or anyone else he or she chooses to be. He enters a cafeteria; gets a slip from the cashier; hangs up hat or bag; gets tray and takes place in line; selects dishes; gets glass of water; finds a table; sits down and prepares to eat; eats from four dishes, making clear by actions what each dish contains; finishes; goes to cashier's desk; has difficulty in making change; almost forgets hat or bag; goes out.

The actor is a salesgirl. It is the day before Christmas and her feet hurt terribly. She is tired and harassed. A woman comes to look at toys; she has her little boy with her. He, too, is in a bad humor. The shop girl displays this toy and that, trying to please the mother and child, and smiling; but the ache in her feet has become an agony. Finally, after numerous efforts at making a sale, her temper flares up. The boy is banging a toy on the counter. She jerks it rudely away from him. The mother gives the girl a piece of her mind as she goes out. The girl sinks on her stool behind the counter.

The actor is a man of twenty-five. He is hungry and cold. He is walking the streets. It is late at night and the street is nearly deserted. Twice he holds out his hand to passers-by, begging for a small coin. He is refused. He shuffles into a doorway and leans against the door to rest. To his surprise, the door swings open. He enters the building which is a little grocery store. He cannot

see clearly but a street lamp outside makes objects faintly visible. He finds some fruit and vegetables. He eats greedily. Then he begins to fill his pockets. Suddenly he hears a sound. He looks towards the door. A policeman searches him. Then he obeys the order, puts the stolen property back, and with hands raised, precedes the policeman through the door.

The actor is a crotchety, spry old lady, who is not in a very good humor. She has a parcel in one hand and an unopened umbrella in the other. She intends to cross the street but it is very difficult because of the many passing cars. She makes two attempts, is nearly struck, and is forced to retreat to the curb. Once she drops her parcel and has difficulty in recovering it. Her ire mounts. Finally, she clasps her parcel firmly, pushes her hat down on her head, and signaling angrily with her umbrella, makes her way with grim determination—and success—across the street.

With these as examples, the actor may begin to compose pantomimes for himself. He may start with any character and situation that strikes his fancy: a henpecked husband going home on a street car, his arms full of bundles, a high school girl getting ready for her date, a farmer boy trying to get his old car started, an amateur actor in his dressing room making up for his first act. He will find that his interest increases as he makes up the pantomimes for himself.

14

THE VOICE IN ACTING

Although visible acting has assumed great importance, the voice still remains the actor's principal instrument of expression. As we have plays without spoken words, so we have instances such as that of Sarah Bernhardt, unable to walk, giving her audience the play solely through the magic of her voice, of Edith Wynne Matthison playing the part of the Peasant Woman in *The Terrible Meek* entirely in the dark—instances in which the character or play is projected completely through the medium of the voice.

The Actor's Voice

In the school theater the actor is often dependent upon the director for an evaluation of his voice and a diagnosis of its good and bad qualities. The director should be able to diagnose simple faults and prescribe simple aids. Fortunately the voices of most healthy young people are normal organically, but they are often inadequate for the actor's needs because of acquired bad habits in the use of the voice mechanism.

Voice is inseparably bound up with body; all its manifestations are dependent upon bodily conditions. Illness, fatigue, worry, irritation, strain anywhere in the body, affects tone production. The director has to remember this in his diagnosis.

Pathological conditions, cases of maladjustment or faulty formations in the speech mechanism, are problems not for the director but for a physician. Even a trained voice expert would not attempt the cure of such cases without the advice of a physician.

The student, we may assume, has an average voice with a nor-

mal bodily mechanism. This is good; but it is not good enough for the actor. On the stage the actor needs a voice with carrying power, range, and flexibility.

CARRYING POWER

What do we mean when we say that a voice must have carrying power? We mean that the actor's voice, while seeming to engage in ordinary conversation, must be easily heard by all the listeners in an auditorium of reasonable size. We do not mean that it should be a loud voice. Loudness is not synonymous with carrying power, for loudness sometimes defeats the speaker's wish to be heard. Nor does a high voice carry better than a low voice, other conditions being normal. Nor is force the quality we require. What, then, gives voice carrying power?

Carrying power depends upon normal and controlled breathing: breathing that makes it possible for the actor to direct the exhaled breath; and it depends upon the unobstructed reinforcement of this vocalized breath in the resonating chambers of the chest, head, and face. This will give to the voice something of the quality of tone possessed by musical instruments. Both the flute and the oboe carry to the remotest corners of auditoriums without loudness or shrillness and without being forced.

To seem to speak naturally and yet to be heard without effort— this is one of the beginning actor's serious problems. How shall he acquire this power?

First, by natural breathing, the breathing he enjoyed as a child but may have lost through bad habits of posture, or because of poor ventilation, improper clothing, or other hindrances of civilization. He can recapture this necessity for a good voice. No matter how he breathes when walking about, he is fairly sure to employ correct breathing when he lies relaxed upon his back. Let him examine his breathing when lying down. He finds that he expands and contracts at the region of the diaphragm *without muscular strain elsewhere*. Then let him try to maintain the same process in a sitting position, while standing, and especially while walk-

ing out of doors. Soon he will find that his diaphragm and associated muscles have become stronger and he is in control of his inhalation and exhalation. Now he can direct the force with which the exhaled breath stream strikes the vocal chords and he can train himself to vocalize all the breath in the stream. Once in full control of breathing, clearness and power will be more apparent. This is the foundation step without which no good voice is built.

The second step is the securing of proper reinforcement of initial tone. This means that the tone made by the controlled stream of breath, passing over the vocal chords, must be free to vibrate in the natural resonating chambers. If all muscles in the speech area—in the throat, mouth, head, and face—are without tension, in all likelihood the tone will find for itself some reinforcement. One wills to increase resonance and exercises to secure it, so that the initial tone may be modified and amplified, and eventually possess the quality and flexibility for carrying power.

There must be lack of tension, there must be complete ease in the speech mechanism before this result can be attained. Since most of the worst faults of voice result from strain or tension, every candidate should examine himself for such restrictions and should practice with regularity exercises which tend to correct such conditions. The muscles most likely to be stubborn are those of the throat, jaws, and tongue. Care should be taken to free them. It will be pointed out later that freedom in these areas is essential in forming the sounds of the language as well as in securing resonance. Correct breathing and adequate resonance are the first requisites for carrying power.

PITCH

A discussion of range and flexibility must begin with a consideration of pitch. Pitch is the actor's natural speech level, the starting point when he begins to develop his range and flexibility. The vocal pitch must be pleasing; not thin and high nor noticeably low and heavy. A voice with a fixed, eccentric pitch limits the

actor to comedy parts and makes it necessary for him to seek new audiences continually. No matter how funny he is, his voice, in time, will become an irritation to his listeners.

How can pitch be changed? In a measure this voice quality is determined by the length and thickness of the vocal chords. When the chords are too long, too short, or too thick, nothing can be done; but fortunately most people are equipped with chords of normal length and thickness which vibrate in a normal way.

If examination proves that the vocal chords are normal but the pitch is high and thin, we may conclude that the chords are too tightly drawn. This may be due to a nervous temperament or to a bad habit of muscular tension. Ease of mind and body, controlled breathing, and a condition of relaxation in the throat will lower the pitch. The unpleasantly low pitch may be associated with a phlegmatic temperament or a body low in animation. Now the chords are loosely drawn and vibrate slowly. The vitalizing of the body, the practicing of exercises demanding quick reactions, will help this condition. Whatever the unnatural pitch, persistent attention will help establish a pleasing level.

RANGE AND FLEXIBILITY

A pleasing voice level is not enough; possessed of the desired pitch, the actor must have a wide range of pitch and flexibility within the range. Without the ability to produce range, he is condemned to type parts; and whatever the part, he is bound to seem monotonous in it.

Range permits the actor to suit his voice level to the emotions and ideas he wishes to express. It is evident that excitement and grief are not expressed on the same voice level; that a joke and a religious truth are no nearer in range kinship than in mental kinship.

The constantly shifting range demanded by dramatic literature keeps the actor from becoming dull and monotonous and saves both his audience and himself from fatigue. A simple exercise for developing range is the following:

Find your own pitch on the piano; then *speaking* the same tones

of the piano, proceed to as high a pitch as you can reach easily. Repeat the exercise downward from your normal level. Never go higher or lower than you can reach with ease. Proceed slowly. No step in the development of voice should ever be hurried. Only slow, continued effort is rewarding.

A student may possess a satisfactory range and be lacking in flexibility of voice; or he may possess flexibility without a wide range. Neither condition will serve the actor successfully. A wide range, and the ability to inflect and modulate the tone, gives the actor an advantage comparable to the advantage of the speaker who possesses a large and colorful vocabulary. He is in command of a tone vocabulary more powerful than any vocabulary of words; it reaches his hearers and influences them before the meaning of the playwright's words have taken effect; it even has the power, when skillfully directed, of denying the meaning of the words spoken. The ability to bend or inflect a single tone, to diminish or increase its force, is the brush with which an actor colors language.

Testing and Analyzing the Voice

The vocal yardstick with which we measure the usefulness of a stage voice is power, dependent upon natural, controlled breathing and adequate resonance, pleasing pitch and wide range, and flexibility. Let us now measure a voice with this yardstick.

We choose several girls and ask them to read the following speech from Kenyon Nicholson's *Torch Song*. We shall make recordings of this reading so that the students may hear their reading as many times as they wish without having to perform the difficult task of being actor and critic at the same time.

(Ivy, now a Salvation Army lassie, was once a torch singer in a night club. Howard, a traveling salesman to whom she speaks in her speech, had asked her to marry him although he was engaged to his boss' daughter. One night, while Ivy is singing, Howard is persuaded to leave her; he goes; and when Ivy meets him several years later, she describes her emotion of that night.)

IVY: (*clutching the Bible to her*) . . . After I got your note that night, it was like the bottom fell out of everything. I couldn't seem to get ahold of myself. (*Noticing his expression*) Oh, don't feel bad——it's all over now; but at the time it left my life so empty—and nothing seemed to fill it. I moped around in that dingy rooming house for days, and one night when I was sitting in my room there was a knock on the door. It was Carl——standing there in his uniform. I'd seen him before—passed him in the hall. He asked if he could come in and talk to me. He'd heard me crying, I guess. Well, I let him talk, for I was pretty blue. From then on he got the habit of dropping in whenever he could—to cheer me up. I liked him from the first. . . . Well, it wasn't long till one evening he took me with him to their regular Wednesday services, in a hall down on Seventh Street. I sang hymns and listened to people testifying—and it did me a lot of good—— Well, quite late that night Carl came in my room again. He sat there on my bed, telling me the wonderful things Salvation would do for me. I didn't take much stock in it at first, but then I figured if God could stop my pain, I would give myself to Him—work for Him all my life——I don't know to this day what happened exactly—— but all of a sudden I felt weak and faint—like I was walking on air. I felt Jesus right in the room! "Jesus," I said, "I'm a sinner. Thou art the Saviour, I take thee to be my Saviour. I put my soul in Thy hands!"——That was all—— And I knew that Christ with all his brightness and power had come into my heart——that the sorrows and temptations had passed away——I was different—new—clean! I was free! Oh, the feeling of safety and peace you get resting on Jesus! Oh, it was glorious, Howard! It's wonderful to have a birthday; but as Carl says, it's more wonderful to have two birthdays. And that's what happened to me, Howard. I was born again! . . . [1]

The speech has been studied, read, and several students have made recordings of it. We now examine one of the recordings for voice qualities.

Our first reaction is to pitch. Suitability to content condemns a high pitch for this speech; it asks for one slightly below middle level. And this is the level of the speaker's voice, which is good. But she did not change her pitch throughout the reading. This indicates that she has no range or that she did not use what she has. We can say that one chart for changes in pitch in this speech can be made as follows:

Beginning with a middle level, change to low on "oh, don't feel bad"; return to middle pitch on "I moped around"; low on "I felt Jesus"; medium low on "that was all."

If, on a second reading, the student is able to make these changes easily, then all she needs to do is demand change in pitch or range of herself. If she finds the changes difficult, she must exercise until she can make these changes.

We examine another recording. This shows good range but no variety within the range. The student, with some appreciation for changes in emotion, changes her speech level in response to her general feelings about the emotion but there are no changes within her general pattern; no single phrases or words are colored by the changing pitch which gives words emotional power. We must question this student's flexibility. We choose some of the words most likely to reveal flexibility: empty, dingy, Carl, blue, hymns, testifying. To them we add some phrases: "liked him from the first," "cheer me up," "did me a world of good."

We say to this student: your voice remains level, emotionally colorless, on these words and groups of words which need variety; your hearers will not be sympathetically moved by them, and will not understand your character's thinking and feeling. You must strive for ease in inflection.

A very simple exercise for inflection is speaking a single word in such a way that it will convey different meanings. The word may be "yes" or "no." The student tries for different meanings:

No? (a question). No. (affirmation). No-o-o. (doubt). No! (astonishment). No! (fear). No! (hate).

Phrases such as "I love you" or "I hate you" may be practiced for inflection in the same way.

We turn back to the first record and seek to analyze it for vocal carrying power. How may we determine carrying power from the record? One way is to examine it for breathy or indistinct speaking. We listen to such words and phrases as "myself," "I couldn't seem to," "it's all over now," "Wednesday services," "thou art my Saviour." These *are* breathy and indistinct and we know that some of the breath stream is not vocalized.

We continue this investigation and find that the breath groups are short, and are dictated by too little breath or uncontrolled breath; we note that the pauses are pauses of necessity rather than pauses to clarify the meaning. In one section, we check the breathing pauses as follows:

After I got your note' that night' it was like' the bottom fell out' of everything.' I couldn't seem' to get hold of myself.' Oh, don't feel bad'——it's all over' now; but at the time' it left my life so empty'—and nothing seemed' to fill it.

Pauses for clarity would have been made like this:

After I got your note that night,' it was like the bottom fell out of everything.' I couldn't seem to get hold of myself.' Oh, don't feel bad'——it's all over now;' but at the time it left my life so empty'—and nothing seemed to fill it.

Having made this discovery, we can assure this student that her voice is unlikely to have carrying power in the theater. We advise her to give intelligent attention to breath control and to exercise daily to achieve this end.

To test further the reading for carrying power, we examine the records for resonance. We direct our attention to words most easily robbed of inflection and power by lack of reinforcement. Note, might, everything, myself, now, empty, knock, nothing, rooming, sang, hymns, faint, are some of the words. Crying, guess, good, quite, again, God, clean, glorious, are others.

It is quickly seen that all of the first list are concerned in some way with the sounds of *m* and *n* and *ng*. In order that the words in which these sounds appear shall not be flat and hard, they must be free to resonate in the head. Extreme lack of resonance produces irritation in listeners.

The second list of words employs sounds that are formed far back in the mouth and involve a lifting of the base of the tongue. Any ·lack of ease in the throat, any tension of the muscles, will block the roads to resonance and result in the vocal effect of words being swallowed or pinched.

In one record we find that the *m, n,* and *ng* sounds are flat and hard; this suggests that they will lack carrying power, and we tell this student that in order to secure resonance, she should close the lips lightly and hum, sending the sound into the nose and causing a vibration of the frontal region of the face. There must be no forcing. Now we tell her to open the mouth and place the tip of the tongue against the hard palate just behind the front teeth; to hum the sound of *n;* to release the tip of the tongue and lift the base, lightly humming *ng*. When the student can do this with resonating effect, she will find that she can speak the words in this list with more carrying power.

In another record we find the effect of the words being swallowed or pinched. We know that whatever opens the throat will secure freedom for the second list of words. So we advise the student: Drop the jaw easily and make the unvoiced sound of *h;* and keeping the mouth and throat open, change to the word *good*. When you can do this without losing the feeling of ease in your throat, you will begin to enjoy more resonance for all your speech.

We may conclude our examination of these voices with the admonition not to be discouraged. Understanding our difficulties and knowing what to do about them is half the battle. The other half is faithful practice of such exercises as we have suggested, supplemented by ones the student may devise for himself, and everyday striving for improvement in all his speech.

The Sounds of the Language

Let us consider a good stage voice in its relation to making the sounds of the language. No matter how good the actor's voice is, he will not be understood and enjoyed unless he can form correctly all the most recurrent sounds of speech.

Tools for the Shaping of Sound

We have discussed the making of tone; now we shall see how sounds are made as this tone is shaped by the use of the tongue, teeth, lips, and jaws.

The lips are less important than the tongue and jaws in the origination of sounds, but they give it the final imprint and can harm or perfect all the original shaping. The lips form the transmitter; language sounds are dependent upon the shape and size of the opening they make for their correctness and clarity. The lips should be free and flexible and slightly flaring in order to send the sound outward.

The teeth function as a point of contact for the tongue and as a barrier for breath.

The tongue itself is the active agent in forming sounds. Upon its flexibility and agility largely depends correctness of speech.

The action of the lips, teeth, and tongue is limited by the action of the jaws. Stiff, inflexible jaws make the proper functioning of the other agents of speech impossible.

These are the tools for shaping sound. They must be mentally controlled and muscularly free and strong.

For freeing the muscles of the lips, whistling is an easy and useful exercise. The easy and rapid repetition of syllables beginning with *w:* wo, wa, we, wi, tends to flare the lips and make an oval aperture, both of which are helpful in projecting speech. *B*, *m*, and *p* may be substituted for *w* to vary the exercise.

Muscles of the jaws do more than control the opening and closing of the jaws; they affect the throat and the free use of the tongue. The free action of the jaws cannot be overemphasized. To this end, the very simple exercise of yawning may be practiced.

Yawn slowly and study the feeling of relaxation which comes to the muscles of the throat and jaws. Yawn again, and just before the breath is released, say "ah," prolonging the sound as long as it can be done easily.

Other jaw exercises are: moving the jaw rapidly from side to side; dropping the jaw and closing the mouth slowly.

The tongue may be freed and strengthened by moving it rap-

idly from side to side, extending and withdrawing it. The mouth should be kept open. Again with mouth open, touch the tip of the tongue against the hard palate just behind the front teeth. Let it fall flat and relaxed in the mouth. This should be repeated easily and rapidly, not permitting the jaws to stiffen. Follow this with practice of the syllable *la*, repeated rapidly; substitute *t*, *d*, or *n* for *l* and repeat the exercise. Continue until all the vowels have been used in connection with the tongue consonants.

Consonants, Vowels, and Diphthongs

The sounds of the language from which words are made are classified as consonants, vowels, and diphthongs. The consonants are *b*, *d*, *z*, *g*, *m*, *n*, *l*, *j*, *r*, *v*, *h*, *p*, *f*, *t*, *k*, *s*, *w*, and *y*; the last two may function as either vowels or consonants. The vowels are *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*. Diphthongs are combinations of vowels.

Consonants are sometimes designated as closed or interrupted sounds, vowels as open sounds. These names are descriptive of the action of the speech mechanism when the sounds are made.

It will be found that in speaking *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*, the mouth remains open and the character of the sound is changed by a modification of the position of the tongue and lips. It is important to remember this openness when we combine the vowel sounds with consonants in the making of words. Language depends upon vowel sounds for its color, beauty, and variety.

The closed condition of consonants is of two kinds: that made by actually closing the mouth as for *b*, *p*, *m*, and that made with open mouth but with interference by the tongue or teeth as for *t*, *d*, *n*, *l*, *j*, *r*, *s*, and *z*. The sounds of *k*, *g*, or *ng* are also made by the tongue, but so far back that they are often thought of as throat sounds. This thought leads to an attempt to make the sounds with muscles of the throat and at once creates tension in that area. The throat should be kept inactive; the speaker should think of the sounds as being made by a movement of the tongue.

Consonants form the framework of speech—that which gives it body; they must be correctly made, by a clean, definite joining of the organs of speech. Because that is so, we shall examine some of

them to see what organs are active in the making of the sounds.

M, n, and *ng* hold a unique place among the consonant sounds. They alone have pronounced resonating possibilities and rival the vowels in contributing color and emotional value to words. In general, consonants should be deftly made and quickly released; but *m, n,* and *ng* gain in power and beauty by being held.

The sound of *m* is made by joining the lips, lowering the soft palate, and sending the vocalized breath out through the nasal passages. This must be done with no tightening of the throat. The speaker should not force resonance, but should be content with a small sound at first.

The sound of *n* is made by slightly separating the teeth and lifting the lips away from them, lowering the soft palate and raising the edges of the tongue to the hard palate, and sending the vocalized breath through the nasal passages. All the head resonators will, with practice, reinforce this sound. New quality can be given to the words employing this sound, especially those beginning or closing with *n.*

In forming *ng,* the back of the tongue is brought in contact with the lowered soft palate and the vocal chords vibrated by the released breath. Again we should be conscious of a good resonating quality. With direction and practice, the many words ending with *ing* can be given a singing quality.

Several exercises may be suggested for making these sounds more effectively. The sounds may be hummed separately. *M* may be hummed and changed to *n. M* and *n* may be hummed and repeated on a single breath as *mn‿mn‿mn. Mon* may be hummed and repeated as *mon‿mon‿mon. Ming* may be hummed, then *ming‿ming‿ming.* Short sentences may be spoken, holding the *m, n,* and *ng* sounds for resonance, such as, Mother makes money. Mary married Mike. No, no, Nanette. Nelson never knocks. Ring the bell and sing. Bring me my mending.

Other consonant sounds are made without effort to resonate them, but by a clear, precise contact and a definite release. There is a correct and exact way of making each of these sounds. If the

student has a question about them, he should consult one of the many books on speech and diction.

Vowels submit to three classifications, each descriptive of the position of the tongue in making the sounds of the group. These classifications divide the vowels into front vowels, middle vowels, and back vowels.

The front vowels are: $\bar{e}$ as in be; $\breve{\imath}$ as in bit; $\bar{a}$ as in bake; $\breve{e}$ as in bet; $\breve{a}$ as in bat; and $\hat{a}$ as in ask.

In forming this group, the highest part of the tongue is in front of the mouth and the back of the tongue is lowered, so that in respect to the mouth cavity the entrance for the voiced breath stream is large and the exit smaller.

The middle vowels are: $\bar{e}$ as in maker; $\breve{u}$ as in burn; u as in upper.

In forming this group, the tongue is flattened, making both entrance and exit relatively large.

Back vowels are: $\bar{oo}$ as in booth; $\breve{oo}$ as in book; $\bar{o}$ as in bold; $\hat{o}$ as in for; $\breve{o}$ as in bottle; $\ddot{a}$ as in art.

In forming this group, the tongue is raised at the back and depressed at the tip, making a relatively small entrance and larger exit.

All vowel sounds are made with the teeth separated and the breath vocalized. The front vowels call for a natural lip aperture with the lips slightly contacting the teeth. The middle vowels demand a neutral aperture but with lips lifted from the teeth. Back vowels are made with the lips well rounded and slightly flared.

Diphthongs are the result of a continuous flow of sound as the position for one vowel is changed to the position for another. There are six recognized diphthongs: *ow* (*ou*), the result of $\ddot{a}$ + $\bar{oo}$ as in cow (bough); $\bar{\imath}$, the result of $\ddot{a}$ + $\breve{\imath}$ as in pie; *oi* (oy), of $\hat{o}$ + $\breve{\imath}$ as in oil (boy); $\bar{a}$, of $\hat{a}$ + $\breve{\imath}$ as in bay; $\bar{o}$, of $\hat{o}$ + $\bar{oo}$ as in bold; $\bar{u}$, of y + $\bar{oo}$ as in use.

It is a common fault to slight the correct forming of diphthongs. To do so results in slovenly pronunciation. We urge their practice, particularly the first which appears in many much-used

words such as bow, cow, down, frown, gown, hound, loud, now, pound, town.

Since vowel sounds should be sonorous sounds, and since they usually lack this quality, not because of lack of knowledge of what position the tongue should take but because the tongue is not free to take the right position, we urge again the necessity of freedom of the jaws, tongue, and lips.

One learns to speak the sounds of the language through daily practice, not extending over a week but over a long period of time.

Pronunciation

Stage speech asks for a clear, correct utterance of vowel and consonant sounds. But even this mastery will not insure acceptable speaking. Pronunciation must still be mastered. This entails the knowledge of the sound values possessed by each letter as it appears in the words of the language, and it entails correct accent; and the exercise of this knowledge should be so natural that no attention is directed to the process of pronunciation.

The most reliable aid to pronunciation is found in a good dictionary. A dictionary should be a personal possession and it should be of convenient size to encourage its use. Those who seek good pronunciation can never guess; they must know.

The careful observation of one's own pronunciation and the observation of the speech of others is helpful. Certain radio speakers may be studied for the excellence of their diction and pronunciation.

Reference to the dictionary, whenever doubts arise, and the conscious adoption of new words into our speech help to build up a vocabulary of words correctly pronounced and well spoken.

If he possesses a normal voice with some carrying power, range, and flexibility, if he makes the sounds of the language correctly, and if he is careful of his pronunciation, the actor is ready, vocally, to undertake the playing of a part on the stage.

15

PERSONALITY, THE THEATER SENSE, AND IMAGINATION

Personality

ALL OF us have known about actors whose popularity was due to their personality. They may have had little knowledge of technique; they may have been ignorant of some of the rudiments of acting; but winning personalities captivated their audiences and they were able to retain a stage popularity for years.

The exploitation of personality is not acting. On the other hand, the actor who is without personality is distinctly handicapped.

By stage personality we do not mean those qualities which make a person unique and set him off from all other people; we have reference to a charm and magnetism which the actor projects across the footlights. Through his charm he gives us a sense of pleasure and through his magnetism he gives us a feeling of contact with an impelling force.

Interesting things are being written about personality. Whether it is "a transcendental entity of some kind which can be recognized rather than cultivated," or whether it is "an unusual combination of quite understandable qualities," or only "a certain robustness and radiant physical health," we leave to the academicians to determine. But we do know that the charm and magnetism of the actor's stage personality are powers by means of which he can hold an audience, and experienced actors are aware that there are times when they need this power. We do not say whether or not

personality can be cultivated; but we do say that if the actor has some of this power, he should thank the gods for granting him a useful stage gift.

The Theater Sense

In an amateur theater in the Middle West, a laundry boy had been in the habit of appearing in the back of the auditorium during rehearsals and remaining until the rehearsal period was over. One day the director asked him if he would be willing to work back stage during the next play. He consented and was present at the first dress rehearsal for instructions.

On the opening night, the director became conscious of a personality on the stage which he had not felt before. He looked around and discovered that it was the laundry boy. Unobtrusively but with assurance, he was taking over supervision of the stage crew. He was sensitive, alert, certain—and a feeling of relief was in the heart of the director.

When the curtain rose, the laundry boy did not leave the stage nor watch the actors. He stood in the wings, intent upon the audience, listening to them, concentrating upon their reactions to the play.

The new stage hand became stage manager. Later the director, encouraged by what he had seen, cast his stage manager in the part of Burgess in Shaw's *Candida*. On the night of the performance, Burgess may not have been played brilliantly, but he was a clear character, at home on the stage, working faithfully to be understood by the audience; and next day the boy was receiving congratulations at the back doors as he went about his job of collecting laundry.

In another instance there were two college girls who wanted to act. One was pretty, with a good figure, a soft voice, an attractive personality; the other was a little too tall and angular, seldom spoke a word, and if she possessed any talent, she kept it well hidden from sight.

But a surprising transformation took place when the two girls

appeared on the stage. They seemed to exchange personalities. The first was unable to project her personality, she was uninteresting and was not at home on the stage. The second was a new creature. As she walked onto the stage she seemed possessed of a self-command and a vivacity which had been absent before; she was completely at home; a new personality, the personality of the character she was studying, came across the footlights.

We have set down here examples of young people who did or did not possess a sense for theater. If an actor possesses this sense, he responds, unconsciously, perhaps, but definitely, to a set of stage conditions; he behaves differently from the way he behaves off stage. The stage sense may be explained as a sensitiveness to the character he is playing, to the physical stage he is acting upon, and to the imaginary audience seated before him.

SENSITIVENESS TO CHARACTER

If the actor is sensitive to character, when he mounts the stage and begins to speak and act a part, a character other than his own seeks to take possession of him. Unconsciously, perhaps, he seems to accept the fact that it is not his personality which is important, but the personality of the character he is to portray.

We do not say that during the first rehearsals he is able to portray the character. His first expression of the character cannot be relied upon; the character has to be studied and analyzed before he can be sure of his expression; but the sensitiveness demonstrates that the actor has the impulse, not to display his own personality, but to identify himself with the character in the play.

The actor who is sensitive to character will early show a power of concentration and a desire to sustain the mood of the play.

SENSITIVENESS TO THE STAGE

A second division of the theater sense may be designated a sensitiveness to the physical stage. It is a sense which becomes manifest when the actor walks onto a stage. A stage is not a living room, a kitchen, or a street, and stage behavior is not the same as behavior in actual rooms and along actual streets. The stage is

something artificial, it is a place of make-believe where a number of rules and conventions, not applicable to actual life, are here found useful. Such rules embrace the necessity for greater clarity and stronger emphasis.

The actor whose stage sensitiveness is developed will instinctively behave, or seek to behave, in obedience to these rules and conventions. The stage will influence his behavior as the character has influenced his behavior. Instinctively, as he walks onto the stage and into the country of make-believe, he becomes a citizen of that country, adopting its customs and abiding by its conventions.

The director soon discovers whether or not his actor is sensitive to stage custom. If he is not, he may walk upstage, his back to the audience, for a piece of important business; he may speak in the tone he would use in an ordinary room; he may cover another actor and not be conscious of it. If he has this sensitiveness, he will be conscious of groupings, of his position in respect to scenery and properties; he will respond to the greater perspective of the theater, to the larger scale of things which calls for a shift from reality to the illusion of reality.

Sensitiveness to the Imagined Audience

A third division yields us a sensitiveness, during rehearsals, to an imaginary audience seated in the auditorium.

By this sensitiveness we do not mean what is termed "feeling the audience." Every sensitive actor feels an actual audience. But feeling an audience and being sensitive to one which is imaginary are not the same thing. In the first instance, the actor is passive and receives; in the second, he is active and attempts to give. An actor may feel an audience and yet neither respond to it nor satisfy it in a theatrical way; but the actor with the audience instinct is sensitive to an audience even during the first days when the auditorium is empty; and he responds to this imagined audience and seeks to please it.

For an acted play is made up of different tempos, of crescendos and diminuendos. At one time speeches should follow one another

rapidly, at another time a slight pause should elapse between them; now a movement should be hurried and merged into other movements, again a movement should be delayed or retarded or come to a halt. The content of the scene and the timing sense of the actor partly determine what to do; but these are sometimes influenced by the mental and emotional interest of the audience.

An audience which is growing restless will need to have speech follow speech in rapid succession if their interest is to be regained; an audience sitting tense and breathless is in a mood for a longer pause than is a restless one. Now the actor, as he is rehearsing the play, becomes aware of the tempo and intensity of the scene; he is sensitive to the response he believes his imaginary audience is giving to the pace and intensity; and he plays to the audience, governing his acting by the ever-changing response of this audience. He seems to hear his audience saying, "Hurry — Hold the pause — Tighten up the scene — Relax — Play stronger." Of course, he may be mistaken in what he thinks he hears; but this response, though occasionally wrong, will make him more ready for the real audience on the night of the performance.

Growth of the Theater Sense

What we are saying is that the actor should be a sensitive person. He should be sensitive to character, stage, and audience. If he has been in several plays, and upon honest examination decides that he has felt no urge to respond as we have suggested, he may conclude that he is still lacking in a part of the actor's equipment.

We offer this encouragement to the beginner: the theater sense usually develops with experience.

For example, we can conceive of a person, inherently an actor, who finds himself at a loss the first time he appears on a stage. He does not respond to the stage because it is still strange to him. An actor of the time of Sophocles, placed suddenly on a twentieth-century stage, would probably be confused until he could adapt his stage sense to the new stage conditions. So the present-day, inexperienced actor, confused and unresponsive at first, finds his sensitiveness developing as he becomes acquainted with the stage

and its customs. The same beginner may likewise feel no sensitiveness to an imaginary audience because he knows so little about audiences; but after acting in several plays, after "feeling" audiences during the performances, his sensitiveness begins to manifest itself.

Imagination

If there were only one word of advice we were permitted to give beyond the advice of cultivating the body and voice, we would say: Cultivate the imagination. If asked why, we would reply: Because at every rehearsal the actor has to imagine walls and furniture and clothes, he has to imagine characters and emotions; because without imagination even a great play becomes dull and dead, with imagination it is given freshness and life.

As part of a tryout held by a college dramatic club, the candidates were given a simple problem in pantomime. Each was asked to imagine himself a thief who has gotten into society and who, having left a party downstairs, enters a room and finds, in the second drawer of a dressing table, a string of pearls. He takes the pearls and escapes with them just as someone enters the room.

Most of the candidates proceeded with the action as outlined by the director. They went through the movements of listening at the door, tiptoeing across the room (with frequent backward and sideward glances) discovering the pearls in the second drawer, holding them up, smiling, turning the head quickly, thrusting the pearls in the pocket, and hurrying off stage.

But one candidate roused the lethargic tryout judges into animated interest. He entered cautiously, but almost came to disaster by bumping into an imaginary chair. When he had recovered, he found the light, and proceeded with even greater caution towards the dressing table. On a fireplace near by he discovered a prop cigar. (The fireplace and cigar had been used in a previous rehearsal.) He examined the cigar carefully and made sure that it had not been lighted recently. Having satisfied himself on this point, he felt relieved and proceeded with the search. He found

several imaginary articles of interest on the table. Then, going through the action of opening the drawer with his pocketknife, he discovered the pearls. He spent no time in smiling over them. He looked at them intently for a moment, then thrust them into his pocket. Suddenly he heard a noise of someone coming. For a second he was at a loss, then he perceived a window, ran to the imaginary light button, threw the room into darkness, felt his way to the window, raised it, and climbed out onto a porch roof and escaped.

It is evident that the last candidate used his imagination. The others saw a door, a table, a drawer, a string of pearls—those things which the director told them to see; he saw a completely furnished room and he found many things in the room which the others did not find. Nothing escaped his notice; even the prop cigar was put to dramatic use.

Surely we will agree that the actor needs imagination. His character must first live in his imagination before it can live on the stage. He must fill out the stage business which the author has only suggested in the written play. He must do something during those moments when he has nothing to say. The unimaginative actor remains dependent upon his director for every move, every gesture, every inflection; he creates nothing; he soon becomes a burden to his director; and he gets very little fun out of acting.

The imagination makes the character complete and alive and interesting, and not a puppet moving about when told to move and speaking lines when he hears a cue word. The imagination is the limitless source from which the actor constantly draws while creating character and perfecting stage business.

Most beginning actors have some imagination, otherwise they would not want to become actors. Many actors do not know how to use the imagination, for the use and cultivation of the imagination are not among the prescribed subjects in our schools. The beginning actor often has to be told that he has an imagination and that it can and should be used in acting. If he is willing to investigate, he finds he has one. If he is willing to trust it, he sometimes finds that it is at his service.

During another tryout which had been proceeding dully and conventionally, another candidate surprised the teacher-judge by giving a pantomime performance which was full of imaginative touches. The teacher in charge tried an experiment. She called in a number of the unimaginative performers to witness this pantomime. Then, without comment, she asked them to repeat their own pantomimes. The result was encouraging. Several of the actors saw pieces of furniture they had not seen before, used articles they had not been aware of, and added ideas and new action to the little story.

An exercise for setting the imagination to work is improvisation. In improvisation the actor makes up his own story, his character, action, and words. Improvisation is a good classroom exercise for a group of students.

The imagination just awakened may operate slowly and conventionally at first; but it should improve with usage. It may be backward in responding, but it will grow more venturesome. Time spent on the cultivation of the imagination is never wasted.

16

REPRESENTATIONAL ACTING AND THE PRINCIPLES OF STAGE BEHAVIOR

THE BEGINNING actor, having discovered that he possesses sufficient equipment for acting, is given passport into the theater. Before he undertakes his first part, he may profit by acquainting himself with two other matters: the style of acting he will use and the elementary principles of stage behavior applicable to this style of acting.

Styles of Acting

Acting is not of one kind. We discover a number of kinds or styles, each owing its popularity to peculiar stage conditions and to the mood and state of culture of the public. A brief examination of some of these styles may lead us away from the notion that the style which is in vogue today is the right and only kind, and may give us needed perspective on our own style.

DECLAMATORY ACTING

A style of acting very unlike our own was popular during the first part of the nineteenth century. We may term it, with some degree of accuracy, the declamatory style. This style owed much of its vogue to the design of the stage and to the fact that the stage had not yet become pictorially interesting, although the mood of the public also must have contributed to the vogue.

The declamatory actor made his appeal to the ear rather than to the eye. His task was more difficult than that of the present-

day actor in that he had to rely upon his voice for many effects which are now achieved through scenery and lighting.

His stage was dimly lighted. A huge apron extended out into the audience, and in order to be seen more clearly he frequently left the proscenium frame and the stage proper, and advanced down the apron until he was near, and almost in the midst of, his audience. There he stood, often alone, without any assistance from lights or background; there he had to play upon his vocal mechanism as though it were an orchestra and through it alone had to draw his audience into the spirit of the play and move them to the desired emotion.

At present we call declamatory acting old-fashioned, implying by that word that the acting is not so good and right as our style. We think it is not right because it is elocutionary and unrealistic. Yet, if we can take the comment and criticism of honest, intelligent theater goers of the periods of declamatory acting, we must believe that their theater experiences were thrilling and joyous, and that their actors were accorded deeper admiration than those of our times.

Declamatory acting moves us by tone and the power of words; it makes full use of the beauty and effectiveness of language; it is akin to the art of music. On the other hand, it tends to narrow acting to a single medium of expression and it stresses the voice out of honest proportions. In the last century it led the actor to the center of the stage where, having pushed the remainder of his cast into the background, he turned his voice loose upon his audience and ran the whole gamut of vocal gymnastics to a degree which now would not be tolerated.

ROMANTIC ACTING

The style called romantic acting is sometimes associated in our minds with declamatory acting, probably because both styles seem exaggerated and formalized to us, both are appropriate to unrealistic plays, and both have stressed audible acting more than visible acting.

Romantic acting differs from declamatory in that it does make

use of bodily language; it differs from our acting today in being more extravagant, startling, and statuesque. It calls for poise, grace, vocal gymnastics; its gestures are more sweeping, its declarations of love and honor are more immoderate, its agony is more intense than we see on our present-day stage.

Charles Fechter, the nineteenth-century romantic actor, when playing Hamlet in the scene ending with the "hie thee to a nunnery" speeches, pretended that he no longer loved Ophelia; he rushed from the stage at the conclusion of the scene; Ophelia waited, speechless; there was a dramatic pause; then he rushed back, fell at her feet, took her hand and covered it with tears and kisses, got up, made his resolve never to show his affection again, and with shoulders thrown back, stalked from the stage. This was a piece of interpolated pantomime, acted romantically.

The romantic actor is called into the theater not so much by peculiar stage conditions as by a demand of the times. A scientific or satiric age has little tolerance for the romantic actor. When an age grows weary of struggle, when it has had enough of realities and wants to dream or sentimentalize, it calls him back into the theater.

The romantic actor can raise his acting to the level of greatness: records of Edmund Kean's acting give us evidence of this. And he is not to be scorned. The audience, coming into his theater with the hearty simplicity of a child rather than with the sophistication of the adult, delights in the pleasure of escape from reality which he brings them.

REPRESENTATIONAL ACTING

Because of the interest in science and the scientific study of man, the mind of the public, during the last years of the nineteenth century, turned towards realism. Realism in art kept pace with realism in thought; and acting which represented man accurately found its way to the stage.

The audience wanted life portrayed not in fine phrase, not in part, not ideally, but as it actually existed; otherwise, how could it find answers to the social questions it asked in its plays, how

could it study life? So the dramatist became a realist and the actor now had to give a realistic interpretation, he had to give an impersonation which was a perfect illusion of reality.

· The actor's style in this instance is called the representational or realistic style. His voice no longer can be always free and clear and beautiful, but must be harsh or thin or slurring according to the dictates of his character; his gesture must not be sweeping but must conform to the gesture of the character. Acting is largely a matter of copying accurately from life.

The result of this style of acting is that an actor frequently becomes associated with a type part. He has the physique, voice, and temperament which permit him to represent accurately a certain type of individual: a hard-boiled military man, a cringing criminal, a young lover—and he is in danger of being cast in this same type part during the whole of his acting career. Acting may cease to be an adventure for him; variety is gone; he may sink to the business of showing *himself* off nightly before his audience.

Yet, representational acting may not be an inferior kind of acting. Skill and art can be applied in the creation of a complete, convincing, realistic characterization; and an audience, in witnessing a fellow human being in struggle, emphasized and highlighted as he is on the stage, may be engaged in a keen psychological or sociological study.

PRESENTATIONAL IDEAISTIC ACTING

At the other extreme from realistic acting, we find a style which presents an idea to the audience, which is not illusionistic. Stark Young has written: "The theory of presentational acting implies that the actor takes to the audience what he has to act and shares the idea with them. In the resulting creation which he achieves, the audience has a definite part. Grasso (a Sicilian actor), for example, when he does a death scene, would as soon present it on the floor of the foyer. What he aims at is the presentation of the idea of death and its struggle." [1]

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[1] Stark Young: *Theatre Practice,* Charles Scribner's Sons. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Here we have a style of acting which seems to follow the trend of modern stagecraft in which we do not find a tree represented by stiff cloth with paint on it, but the idea of a tree suggested through the use of draped cloth and lighting. The actor is asked to present to us something beyond the character's voice, walk, and way of thinking; he is asked to present to us the idea which that character stands for, the idea of love or degradation or poverty or willfulness; he is asked to present to us, not an individual struggling against fate, but the idea which is involved in this struggle.

This style of acting calls for an intelligence and imagination beyond the demands of any style we have discussed. It asks intelligence and imagination of the audience as well as the actor. It is not only difficult, it is also a style of acting which would not meet with popular acceptance at the present time.

The Amateur's Goal in Acting

Representational acting is often too unimaginative, too literal, too commonplace. On the other hand, the style of acting we have been describing is beyond the capabilities of most amateurs and outside the interests of their audiences. But there are usable qualities in both styles. It is not impossible to think of bringing the two styles more closely together than they are now.

Just after the First World War we were amazed and won by the acting of the Moscow Art Theater. We were told that the acting of this company was representational or realistic. The actors seemed to behave as actual human beings behaved, their voices were the voices of the characters they portrayed, and their gesticulation was that of a real world. Yet, as one of the actors in the production of *The Lower Depths* moved about in the person of a nameless, voiceless character, as she sat, got up, stood, walked here and there, and slunk off into the darkness of the cellar, she was more than a nameless, wordless individual; there was a tremendous power of suggestion in her posture, her walk, her silence; she was not a single individual but seemed the epitome of dozens of lives; there was projected an idea which is not present in most representational acting. She was actual, but she possessed

a "reality" greater than "actuality." The illusion gave us more than ordinary illusion. The representation was secondary to the presentation of an idea.

The amateur will be a representational actor because this style of acting is still the order of the day. Character portrayal is still at the heart of modern drama. But the representational actor would do well to read the books of the Russians on the methods of the Moscow actors.

Our actor will go to actual life for his material. He will use the voice, gesture, and personality of actual life as he creates his character. But he may also find in his character an idea—that which makes him important to both play and audience. And through subsequent careful selection of business and careful emphasis in speech, he may be able to give his characterization a suggestive power beyond the characterization in most amateur plays.

Acting has been taken too much for granted by us. We have accepted a style of acting without thinking about it. We have been working without a clear idea of what acting can and should do. We need a definite goal. Even if we choose one beyond our present powers of attainment, our acting will be better for having striven towards it.

Elementary Principles of Stage Behavior

Even though we accept this glorified realism as the style of acting we dream some day of mastering, we must keep in mind that we still have to work in representational plays on a representational stage. Certain principles of behavior are convenient and customary to this stage. With these the beginning actor should become acquainted.

THE STAGE

The most obvious of these principles refer to the stage itself. The stage has four sides, but since the audience sits opposite one side only (except in central staging) the actor must accept this condition and play towards the audience side.

The stage, when it is set up to represent an interior, is not ar-

ranged as an actual room is arranged. The furniture is adjusted to fit the artificial conditions of the stage and at the same time preserve some illusion of reality. Most of it faces the audience. The actor is asked to behave, not as he would in a real room, but as if the room had a *front*, towards which, in most instances, he is expected to face.

The whole of the stage within the set forms the playing space, but three points need to be borne in mind: one, the spaces at the two sides are in the least emphatic positions and are undesirable acting spaces for important scenes; two, downstage center is the spot towards which action tends to converge; three, action and positions should not be concentrated in one section of the stage for any length of time, but should be distributed.

STANDING

Several simple principles may be set down in respect to standing. First, although there is no absolutely right or wrong way to stand (character and emotion dictate rightness and wrongness) there is a positive and negative way. Whenever character and emotion permit, the actor should stand with both feet firmly on the floor, and with that part of his body which is being used for expression clearly visible to the audience.

It is not necessary to stand either full face or with profile to the audience; at times it is permissible to stand with the back to the audience. Standing squarely facing the audience during the delivery of a speech is usually inadvisable; it may suggest that the actor has faced this way on purpose to deliver the speech, in which case the behavior of the actor and not his character is in the minds of his audience.

Two actors may stand side by side or facing each other or at some angle between these positions. The intensity of emotion, the mental clash, the natures of the characters largely determine the positions. For instance, if a girl is coquetting with a man, her body will most naturally form a right angle with his. If a man is bringing an enemy to task for lying about him, he will probably face him squarely.
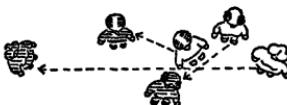
TRIANGLE ARRANGEMENT-CHANGING TRIANGULAR FORMS

If two actors have maintained the same positions for some time, one or both may shift positions for no other reason than to avoid monotony.

A line of three or more actors across the stage looks unlifelike
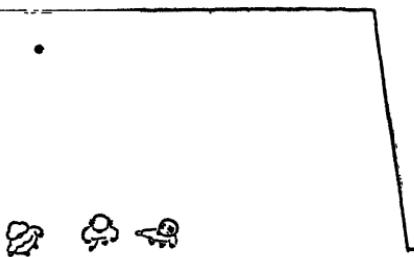
ACTORS IN STRAIGHT LINE AND TOO FAR DOWNSTAGE

and "stagey"; a triangular or semicircular arrangement is better than a line.

The beginner is warned not to stand too near the footlights where he is "out of the picture."

MOVEMENT

When no movement is asked of us, we should stand still, we should do nothing bodily until we can do something which will contribute to our characterization or to the dramatic progress of the scene.

We may distinguish two kinds of stage movement which, in their importance to the dramatic element in the play, may be classified as positive and negative. A positive movement is one

which is definitely constructive and carries the scene forward. A negative movement is unimportant to the drama, is usually transitional, and may be compared to the changing of sides between innings. For instance, a man moves forward to a table and discovers that an important book has disappeared. His movement is positive since it is essential in the scene. But there are several people around the table before he advances. They must get out of his way. Unless there is a dramatic reason for staging their movement, they leave the table in an unobtrusive manner which will not attract attention.

In both kinds of movement the actor should devise some simple motivation, some reason for his movement. Beyond this, positive movement is intentional, emphatic; negative movement is unemphatic, almost surreptitious. The actor, recognizing the importance or unimportance of a particular movement in a play, makes it either positive or negative.

The matter of the sense of location is definitely related to stage movement. The actor must be able to make his way about the stage by means of a natural or developed sense of location. Many times he does not look in the direction of his objective because the spot towards which he wishes to direct the attention of the audience is entirely different. For the sake of a stage picture or a later piece of business, the director may move an actor from one place to another, but he may want the attention of the audience to be on an entirely different place.

For instance, an actor's business may be to come in, walk past a table, and take a seat at the other side of the room; but the important matter, as far as the audience is concerned, is the spot which the actor has just left outside the room. The actor must enter and, as he does so, keep his attention on the spot outside. His movement towards the seat must be accomplished without attracting attention to the furniture; he reaches his seat without calling attention to where he is going.

There is a general rule for turning but it is not that an actor must always make a turn which is towards the audience. It is accepted that a turn towards the audience is often desirable. But

in normal circumstances the actor should make a turn which is comfortable. In exceptional circumstances, such as when a turn is made to bring a character face to face with his enemy or to prompt an important speech, the turn should be made in the way which brings the character to his objective swiftly and dramatically.

There is a good stage rule which says that at some time during the play every part of the stage should be called to the attention of the audience. Areas of the stage may now and then be neglected. When leaving a group, an actor may sometimes turn and move towards a neglected portion of the stage and bring it into the play.

In life, we avoid crossing directly in front of someone else whenever possible. On the stage, if the movement is positive, the actor's cross will be more emphatic if it is made in front rather than behind. Because of stage custom, this will not be looked upon as a breach of etiquette.

In a recent performance given by amateurs, one of the actors made a cross from left to right. He, and three other actors, were downstage. He walked up left, crossed behind the others, then down right for his exit. In life this would have been a courteous thing to do; on the stage the sight of his journey was so uncommon that most of the audience was conscious of an over-nice piece of stage movement and the actor's exit, dramatically, was a failure.

Crossing in front is not set down as an unbreakable rule. If it is more comfortable to cross behind and if such a crossing does not look awkward, the convention should be broken.

We offer as final suggestions: positive movement on the part of a character should be direct and not meandering; broken movement gives the impression of hesitancy or change of mood; too much movement is better for the play than too little; and we repeat once more—all movement should have a purpose.

Distance

In most instances the actor should cut down the distance between himself and his audience rather than increase it; that is, he should play downstage rather than upstage. In a small theater,

however, where illusion may be disturbed by too close contact, he should beware of playing over the footlights.

Two things determine largely the distance between characters in conversation on the stage: the size of the stage and the nature of the dialogue. When the stage is small, they may sit at opposite sides of the room and still retain the illusion of reality and natural-
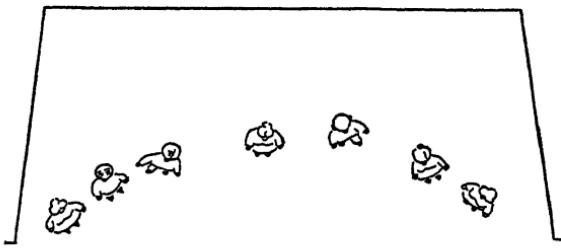
ACTORS FORMING TOO MANY SMALL UNITS - SHOULD BE
GROUPED TOGETHER IN TWO OR THREE UNITS

ness. As the scene grows more tense or more confidential, the distance between the two is shortened.

Most amateurs have a tendency to bunch together and so do not create an effective open stage.

As more characters come on stage and several groups form, the distance between the individuals in each group should be lessened so that each group becomes a compact unit.

GESTURE

Like everything else done on the stage, each gesture should have a purpose. Many amateurs use one or two meaningless gestures which they repeat to the point of monotony. Beginners are asked to remember these simple facts about gesture.

Gestures may be used to reveal character. Certain gestures are consistent with a particular character, others are not; certain gestures will help interpret this character to the audience, others will not. A restless, excitable fellow will not use the same gestures as a lazy, easy-going Negro boy. The actor determines the gestures which are expressive of his character, uses them and no others.

There are gestures of direction: those which draw attention to the character, object, or anything outside and away from the actor.

There are gestures of emphasis. A line often may be made more emphatic if it is accompanied by a gesture.

There are gestures of emotion which appear as spontaneous physical expressions of an emotion within the character.

Remembering these facts, the actor should be selective of the gestures he uses; he should make them positive and big enough so they may be seen; he should not use too many of them; and he should complete each gesture he begins.

Speech

Several principles concerning speech may be included in this chapter.

Because of the greater distances in the theater, a tone of voice suitable to an ordinary room will not be heard distinctly. Yet, in its tone, strength, and quality, the ordinary voice must be suggested. The actor must seem to speak naturally when in reality he is speaking unnaturally. Enunciation must be clear and exact. Carrying power is given the voice by allowing more time for the vowel sounds; if this is not sufficient, by giving the voice more strength without disturbing its tone, pitch, or other qualities.

The nature of a speech determines its direction. The actor may speak directly to the person addressed, he may speak while looking at some object which occupies or interests him, or he may look directly away from the person he is addressing. The speech itself should tell him where to direct it.

Since the declamatory style is not in vogue, he should not direct his speech pointedly to the audience. Even though the speech is for the audience, he should not let them be aware that he is speaking to them.

In summary, the actor's stage behavior is circumscribed by the location of his spectators, by the arrangement of his stage, and by his character. Within these limitations, he should behave as naturally as possible.

17

CREATING THE CHARACTER

AT LONG last the actor is ready to undertake a part on the stage. He has attended tryouts, has been chosen, has a script or playbook, and rehearsals have begun. Now just what is he supposed to do?

Characterization is the center of most of our realistic drama. More than story and idea, and even in plays of story and idea, we are interested in the individuals in the play. Our plays are now filled with subtle, complex, highly individualized human beings. What the actor is supposed to do is translate one of these written characters into a living character on the stage.

Once it was held that there are two kinds of parts in acting: straight and character parts. It was said that in the straight part the actor remains himself, acting himself, adding mood, gesture, passion as the dialogue and the author's descriptions direct. The actor creates nothing; he exhibits his own personality. In the character part he goes outside himself and from observation, experience, and tradition, creates a new figure, diverse from himself.

This division may be made in the movies today but not in the theater. In our drama the so-called straight part very rarely appears. Because a character is young and normal, it does not follow that he is "straight," and that his mind and spirit are the same as those of the actor who is to portray him. The playwright conceived a very individual young man or woman, made up of a specific combination of qualities and attributes; and the actor playing this young man or woman must find these qualities and create a character who is as definitely a personality as some highly individualized old bum who is a combination of philosopher, sneak thief, and itinerant preacher.

Where is the straight part in *Candida,* in *Ah, Wilderness!,* in *The Family Portrait, They Knew What They Wanted, Quality Street, The Golden Boy,* or *Hedda Gabler?*

The actor is called upon to create a character outside himself, a person who is distinct and different, who is a creature observed, studied, understood; who is built up in the mind and imagination, and revealed through all the mediums of expression.

When the actor has heard the play read and has been given his playbook, he should begin work immediately on his character. As he begins his work, he should remember that characterization is two-fold. There is the character as he appears: his movements, gestures, qualities of voice, the clothes he wears, all those external attributes and qualities which are so integral a part of his personality. There are also the mental and emotional qualities of the character, the habits of mind, the "heart," the sentiments, the whole inner nature made up of what and how he thinks, of what and how he feels. So the actor has the double task of creating both the external and internal character.

The actor with a trained body and voice will find the external character the easier to express. The actor who is sensitive and imaginative may find the inner character the easier. But the actor must know both of these "selves" and present both of them to the audience.

Full Comprehension of the Character

When the actor knows the play and understands what it is about and what is to be done with it, his first task is the complete comprehension of the character he is to portray. Let him not think that his job is primarily inspirational. Let him not cultivate the idea that mental application is unnecessary. Good, hard mental effort precedes emotional expression and inspiration. After his mental work has been well done, then perhaps he may have a gleam of inspiration, then his emotional expression will be sound.

He must understand, he must know all about this character whom he is to reveal to his audience through his own person.

How shall he set about his task? As he begins it is presumed that he knows something about life in general and people in particular, gained from his experience, observation, and imagination; for he cannot interpret life if he knows nothing about life. An actor cannot act a drunkard if he knows nothing about drunkards; an actress cannot represent the internal and external characteristics of a nun if she knows nothing about nuns.

We are not suggesting that the young man get drunk and the young woman enter a convent before they attempt their parts. These acts might give neither of them the understanding needed. The knowledge does not have to be gained through personal experience. Leon Errol, the funniest interpreter of the inebriate of a generation ago, was a shrewd observer of the art of drinking, but not a practitioner.

The actor begins to study the play by concentrating on his own part. He must comprehend this character thoroughly. So he goes to the character itself and studies first the playwright's remarks about the character; for the modern author does not neglect his characters in the matter of descriptive passages and stage directions.

STAGE DIRECTIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS

Let us say an actress is going to undertake the part of Mrs. Midget in *Outward Bound*. First, of course, she must have some conception of the play as a whole. She must know that it is a play of idea and atmosphere interpreted through character reaction to the idea of death and the hereafter; that the play must be carefully and sensitively acted; that the tone of the play must not be gloomy and depressing.

Then she may begin on the stage directions and parenthetical descriptive comments. The description of Mrs. Midget, given as she first enters, is as follows: "Mrs. Midget wanders in from the deck. A poor charwoman in little black bonnet, black shawl and dress—her best. Very humble, simple, and obviously out of place in these strange surroundings. But sweet and motherly." Later in the play the author says she "wanders on." When Mrs. Cliveden-

Banks remarks that no one could possibly be called Midget, the author states that Mrs. Midget "warms in quick resentment." In another place she speaks "resentfully." Once she "wipes her neck with her handkerchief." [1]

From these stage directions and descriptive passages, the actress begins to construct the character of the woman she is going to interpret. The actress learns that externally Mrs. Midget gives the impression of poverty, of neatness, of having a low occupation, of being unused to the manners of society, and unacquainted with a ship. She learns that internally her character has the qualities of humility, simplicity, sweetness, and motherliness; yet she possesses pride and can be resentful. The playwright further says that she is a likable, sympathetic old woman. This is not her full character; it is a beginning on her character, gained from a study of the stage directions and descriptions.

THE CHARACTER'S SPEECHES

The actress continues her study by examining Mrs. Midget's speeches in order to see if they tally with the author's descriptions and in order to add more to the growing characterization. Her first speech is to Mrs. Cliveden-Banks. She says: "You'll excuse me, mum, but——" A few speeches farther on: "No, very pleased to meet yer. You see, mum, I 'ad to follow yer because you see, mum, I've been struck all of a 'eap." She uses the ungrammatical expression "as it were" which amuses Mrs. Cliveden-Banks and she endeavors to correct herself with: ". . . it were like this, *as it was.*" She is repeatedly saying "Thank you, sir," and "Thank you, mum." When she warms in quick resentment to Mrs. Cliveden-Banks' insulting remark about her name, she says, "Midget's as good a name as any other, Midget is. And don't you forget it, old Mrs. 'Igh and Mighty. My name's Midget all right, Midget married me, all right, and I can prove it, and I've got my lines, which was a job to get as I admit." And later: "I've nothing to 'ide, I've not, I'm not one of these——"

As she begins to puzzle over the strange situation of her being on shipboard she says: "Am I ill? I don't think so. I don't feel ill. And yet, I said to Mrs. Roberts last Thursday—or was it Wednesday?—never mind, I said to 'er anyway, I says, 'What I want' says I—or did she say it to me? Never mind, it don't make no difference, one of us says to the other 'What I or you,' according to whichever one of us did say it, 'want is a thorough 'oliday.' " [2]

So the actress continues her study, verifying and adding to her conception of the character which she gained through the stage directions. If the playwright has written his character well (and in this instance he has), each speech will be in character or will reveal some new phase of the character. The actress is now able to verify the author's descriptions. To what she has already learned she adds an ungrammatical, cockney dialect, a simplicity of mind, a sensitiveness, a timidity of speech and spirit, an ignorance of much of the world; and she is able to build up the environment in which Mrs. Midget has lived and to reconstruct important instances in her past life.

THE REACTION OF THE OTHER CHARACTERS

The actress has a third study to make. She can still discover things about her character in the reactions of the other people on the ship to Mrs. Midget: in what they say, do, and reveal. Mrs. Cliveden-Banks' first reaction to Mrs. Midget is the exclamation "Good gracious!" Mrs. Cliveden-Banks reacts with both amusement and disgust to the old woman's slangy language and her bad grammar. She behaves toward her in a superior, condescending manner. She cannot conceive of the charwoman as a passenger. Tom Pryor, another passenger, and of a lower station in life than Mrs. Cliveden-Banks, likewise cannot accept Mrs. Midget as a social equal. He calls to the steward: "Oh, steward, just get someone to show this woman steerage—er—third-class deck—or something, will you?" Neither of them has any respect for Mrs.

Midget's sensibilities. Even in her presence Mrs. Cliveden-Banks exclaims: "Well, then—if she eats—and if there's only one class—she will eat in the same place we shall. It can't be done, I shall disembark immediately." [3]

The actress, then, continues to build up the character, verifying her previous impressions and adding to them from what she learns from the reactions and speeches of the other characters. It is obvious that this necessary study cannot be made if the actress has only her own part and her cue words. She needs the entire play.

A comprehension of the character can be obtained from a study of what the playwright says of her, of what she herself says, and of what the other characters say of her. Each should be investigated, for each yields necessary information. From the three sources the actress can gain a clear and full understanding of the character she is to interpret.

From our experience we would be willing to say that nine out of ten beginning actors will not make the study we have outlined. Either they are incapable of making it, or, which is more likely, they are lazy and leave the work to the director. This is not solely the director's business; it is the business of every actor who undertakes a part.

Realization of the Character

The first step in the creation of character is taken with the mind, and results in a mental conception of the character, a complete understanding of his physical, mental, and spiritual nature. The next step is accomplished largely through the imagination. This step we may call a *realization* of the character as we transfer him from the book or the stage to actual life.

The actor, we say, takes the character away from the printed book, away from the stage of the theater, and transports him, in his imagination, to a real world, so that the character shall become

a more real person because he is identified with a living, not a make-believe world.

We·are presuming that the actor has come in contact with life before he undertakes a specific character. A recluse makes a poor actor. There is an old journalistic expression "having an eye for copy." This eye for copy is valuable to the actor. He should cultivate his powers of observation, so that when he is assigned a part, he will be able to call upon his memory of actual people for counterparts of his character's attributes and behavior; or so that he can go to actual people who can help him make his characterization more real. (An interesting short story by Leonard Merrick called *A Very Good Thing for the Girl* tells of an actor's endeavor to realize his character through the observance of actual life.)

The actor, then, should see his character not on the stage but in life. He should see him on the streets and in homes and stores, associating with actual people. He should conceive of him as flesh and blood, as living in the present. Life, and not other characters from plays or books; life, and not a secondhand interpretation of some movie actor; life, and not the imagination alone, is the material from which the characterization is molded. The character is first a mental study derived from the play; then through the active imagination he inhabits a real world; then (either as a transcription or a composite) he becomes a well-rounded, believable human being when he walks out onto the stage in the play.

The Character's Biography

There is another step we should take before we are ready to talk about getting into the part—a step which will round out the character. We ought not even memorize lines until we know all we can know about a character. The more we know about him, the more easily can we give meaning and conviction to the specific lines and actions of the play. It is advisable, then, to think all around a character, to work out, in a brief way, his biography.

Such a proposal may seem beside the point, or may seem to in-

volve the expenditure of too much time. As a matter of fact, it is not beside the point, but directly to it. When an actor is preparing to play a historical character, he does not confine himself to the dramatist's descriptions and speeches in the play. He studies the history of the time and he reads all he can find on the life of the character. Think of an actor who knew nothing about Abraham Lincoln basing his entire interpretation on the material found in Sherwood's play!

If biographical material is helpful in the creation of a historical character, why should it not be helpful in the creation of a fictitious dramatic character? True, we have no books which narrate the events in the boyhood of our character, but our author has given us, in all probability, a fairly complete idea of the character, has suggested his environment, has hinted at much of his background and early life in his portrait of the man as he appears at present. Is it not reasonable that the actress playing Mrs. Midget will be a better, more convincing Mrs. Midget if she takes the incidents mentioned in the play—the wedding, the conversation with Mrs. Roberts, and other incidents—and reconstructs the scenes in which they occurred? If she goes back even farther and accompanies the poor, lovable old soul from a girlhood of poverty into a womanhood of toil and trouble?

Nine out of ten student actors never see their characters outside the specific scenes of the play; and nine out of ten of their characterizations are shallow and convey no impression of reserve knowledge, for they are telling all they know about the characters in the lines they speak. The reason for this insufficiency is that they do not know enough about their characters.

The question may be asked: Does not this biographical work require a great amount of time? The answer is: Imagining a biography takes very little time. The biography is built up and put together during spare moments when the actor, if he were not thinking about the character, would be thinking about various odds and ends which at the time are neither as important nor as interesting as this imaginative biography.

To the actor who has kept his imagination alive, the making of

a biography is good fun. The actor, starting from a knowledge which a study of the character has given him, simply allows his fancy to enjoy itself. The actor who has undertaken the interpretation of Johnny's father, Ben Alexander, in Saroyan's *My Heart's in the Highlands*, is transported in fancy to Ben's early days in southern California, when he was one of the Armenian immigrant's children. He is with him that day when he first fell in love with poetry—that day he met the funny stranger on the dusty road. He sees him on the day his father died; on the day he falls in love with the dark-eyed girl; and on the day he marries her. How happy Ben is on that day! He writes some poetry, but it is not good enough, and he tears it up. The actor passes through Ben's contacts with life: his inability to hold a job, and how little it matters to the members of the family who have learned to take what life gives them and be happy; his sorrow over the death of the dark-eyed girl; his wanderings from community to community; his acquisition of wealth—ten dollars— and how proudly he pays a month's rent in advance on the little house on San Benito Avenue. . . .

So Ben becomes a complete human being with a history. When the curtain rises on Ben in his room, he is not an actor who five minutes before was powdering his make-up in his dressing room; he is a personality with thirty years of memories, who fits perfectly into the situation at the opening of the play.

Memorization

After the actor has comprehended his character, realized him, and knows something about his life before he reached this crisis which is the play, he is ready to begin memorizing his speeches. The method of play production as now practiced does not permit this order of procedure. It usually decrees that an actor be given his part on Monday night, that he give his attention to stage movement on Tuesday, and that he have the lines of act one memorized by Saturday. This is unfair to the actor but in most cases he can do nothing about it. He should, however, during these first

days when he must turn his attention to memorization, spend as much time as possible on a study of character.

We sometimes read about methods and rules for the memorization of lines. Since memorizing is, technically, a very simple process for most people, and since there is much variation in the habits of memorizing, no method will be outlined; but two points in connection with memorizing will be mentioned.

First, let the actor memorize his lines carefully and as they are written. If the play is a first-rate play by a good dramatist, the dramatist has undoubtedly thought out his dialogue carefully; he has given it conciseness, exactness, character, cadence. It is presumptuous for the actor to attempt to improve upon it; when he only half memorizes it, it is unjust to the character and the whole play.

Second, let him memorize, or at least pay close attention to, the parenthetical directions which concern his action and speaking of lines. How often does a director have to call the attention of his amateurs to the fact that the author has written such directions as "coldly," "disregarding a sign from De Levis," "dryly," "concealing a smile," "aghast," "sullenly." They even overlook such directions as "taking off his tie," "changing into slippers," "nodding towards the wall, left," "straightening up," "looking at his watch." It is not the director's business to call the actor's attention to these things. They concern the actor directly. Observation of them is often most helpful to him.

Trying for Character

Sometimes a director says: "When you get your lines, then we'll begin to try for character." The actor by this time should know that this is bad advice. He should begin to associate himself with the character as early as possible. But some actors, especially those with little experience, are greatly handicapped in their bodily and vocal expression of character so long as they have their lines in their hands; they seem free to concentrate on character only when they are free of the playbook. In such a case it may be

well if the director does not insist upon much *expression* of character during the period of memorizing; but this does not free the actors from the responsibility of working on character. Character is not something which, one day, will be put on like a coat; we must live with it, and grow into it. The time to begin to try for character is the moment the character is clear in the actor's mind.

One may be familiar with a character, may have worked with him faithfully and to good purpose, and still find difficulty when he tries to express the character in rehearsal. A hard moment for the inexperienced actor is when he first appears in rehearsal as Herbert, the old cabby, and not as Art Skinner, the first-semester junior. He seems so handicapped, so self-conscious; the character is not right, and he and everybody knows it.

Such a realization of his shortcomings is nothing ignominious; it is a compliment to his sensitiveness and sincerity. A director, if he knows nothing about acting, may be harmful at this time. He should be lenient and sympathetic, and he should keep stray visitors out of the rehearsal room. The actor should be encouraged to risk mistakes, and to try; try, even though the result is far from satisfactory; and rehearsal conditions should help him and not hinder him. The actor, we say, should be willing to try, "to make a fool of himself" in trying. What is the difference if he does? This is nothing but a rehearsal. Thousands have "made fools of themselves" before. If he is in error, the director will correct him before the night of the performance. Let him have confidence in his director.

There is no absolute answer to the question: "*How* shall I try for character?" One dangerous way of beginning is by imitating what we conceive as the character's walk or his way of speaking. These are externals and they are minor matters; moreover, they seldom lead into character but more often halt the characterization then and there.

The actor should now give his mind a rest and try to *feel* the character, working from the inner to the outer characterization. Often he can begin with an emotionalized scene in the play, one in which the character can be felt strongly and sympathetically.

He can feel with the character in such a scene. He understands him by now, is sensitive to him, hears his voice, sees his gestures; so he tries to make him his own, not through his own mind and will, but through his feelings.

What is the probable result of these first efforts? More likely than not, they will be unsuccessful. But perhaps for a moment, for the length of a speech, the actor recognizes (or the director recognizes) that he has succeeded. He spoke the speech in the character of Herbert, the cabby! So, he tries again. He continues trying, concentrating on the character whom he knows so well, feeling him, living the scene with him. Again he may be rewarded with a momentary victory.

Becoming a character is not a process which can be traced step by step. Neither is it a process which always operates the same way. For instance, there are actors who work and try for days, even weeks, without being able to give expression to character; then suddenly, almost miraculously, Art Skinner, the junior vanishes, and Herbert, the cabman, stands in his place. The actor is transformed during a single rehearsal. Thereafter his character difficulties are fewer, and he can work with more confidence.

Other actors try now and fail, and try again and succeed, holding the character for a few speeches, then dropping it. They get into the character for one scene, but they are unable to be anyone but themselves for the rest of the rehearsal. But at the next rehearsal, they take on the character for two scenes, and finally they can go through the entire play "in character."

Still others grow into a character slowly, almost imperceptibly, adding a habit of mind, a quality of voice, a mannerism, building up the character bit by bit; living in their old house while they erect the new upon the same ground.

And even the same person may become one character in one way and another in a different way.

The advice is: first understand, then feel, then try. If the materials for expression are in readiness, the reward will be there, even though it may seem a small one in return for so much hard work.

Details of the Characterization

The characterization is still not complete. It is probably a good rough sketch, but details have been overlooked in the task of working on the important characteristics. As the whole play must be perfected and completed, so must the character. The actor knows the gesture which the character would make at a particular moment, but how about the physical hand that makes the gesture? Is it his own hand, or does it belong to the character? Mrs. Midget has one kind of hand; Ben Alexander, the poet, another; and Herbert, the cabby, still another. Hands are not alike. Each is a part of the character. The actor's hands should become the hands of his character; then, when he pats Johnny's shoulder, it is Ben Alexander's hand which pats the shoulder, not Art Skinner's.

He knows the emotion the character would feel, he knows why he would think the thoughts he is thinking; but what of the voice with which he speaks? Would it have quite so much of the vibrancy of youth as he is giving it? Would it be quite so vital, or more vital? Is there a tone quality lacking? For, remember old Herbert has lived out of doors a great deal, and outdoor people use their voices in one way, indoor people in another.

The actor may do commendably well with his characterization without paying much attention to such details; but he will not do a complete job; the expression of the character's mind and spirit will still be confused with the expression of himself.

Putting the Character into the Play

During these days when an actor is working on the building of a character, he should not be expected to pay much attention to anything else. The director may be fussy about stage business or the pace of the play, but the actor, at this time, need not take the director's anxiety too seriously. He knows that the director is justified in feeling anxious, for he has to worry over all that must be done before the play is ready for the opening night; but the actor has one important job which must be done *now:* he must create his character.

When he begins to see light in the darkness, when he is able to live in the character and commences to enjoy himself, then he can give his attention more completely to stage movement, pace, and the like; and then he can give his mind to the last of his character problems: putting the character into the specific action of the play and making him a unit in the larger, greater unit of the play. We have been speaking as though characterization were all important. For a time it has been. The play was not written for the character, however, but the character for the play. So the actor now shifts his viewpoint. He ceases looking within and looks about him. He forgets about the character's biography—it has served its purpose—and concentrates on what his particular job is in the play. Stage business becomes important now, and the relationship to other characters, and atmosphere and tone. The actor brings this new personality which he has created into a set of rigid stage conditions, and he subjects this personality to the discipline which the conditions demand.

As one actor goes from characterization into the play, he sometimes without effort makes himself a unit in this larger unit; he is able to see the place he should occupy in the play and seeks to fill this place and do neither more nor less. But another actor has to be told about these things.

The character which the actor has found is not the entire play. The character has been included in the play, shall we say, to contrast with another character, or to get across exposition, or to make objective an idea, or perhaps he is one of a group of characters who are presented to demonstrate some theory or to explain some locality. He does not stand alone. He has a relationship to the other characters, a duty towards them; he has a definite obligation to the play as a whole.

In order to make himself a unit in a larger unit, the actor does not use any technical devices. Usually all that is necessary is the simple recognition of certain obligations beyond character creation. This recognition (if the actor is not a selfish exhibitionist but desires to help make the play a success) will be sufficient to give him a cooperative spirit and the inclination to put his character

into that place in the play where it will fulfill its intended purpose, be that purpose great or small.

Two steps are still to be taken before the actor is ready for his stage appearance: he must be costumed and made up in character; but these matters are not definitely a part of character creation and will be discussed elsewhere.

May we add one final suggestion which may help in the creation of character? The actor, upon learning his lines, sometimes casts his playbook aside and never looks at it again. This is a mistake. He should go back to it many times. It is surprising how much we can overlook during our first study and during our days of memorization. We are looking for the big, important things, or we are concentrating on learning lines. In our subsequent readings, we are apt to discover meanings, moods, ideas which escaped us before we knew our character so well. Now we see them, use them, and our character becomes a little clearer, a little more complete.

18

THE CHARACTER ON THE STAGE:
GENERAL ACTING PROBLEMS

WE HAVE been considering the character as an entity divorced from dramatic action. Sooner or later he must become a part of the action. As the actor moves the character into the action of the play, a number of new questions, nearly as important as those in characterization, begin to appear.

It may seem to the beginner that if he is expected to solve all the problems we are setting down (and the end is not yet in sight) then the sensible thing for him to do is to give up and select some simpler, easier profession such as composing symphonies or designing airplanes. Let him be comforted. All of these problems do not arise in the same play or at the same time; and no actor is concerned with all of them.

The following three chapters will concern the character as he becomes a part of the continuous dramatic action which is the play. First, we shall say something about general questions of acting which arise; second, about problems of movement; and third, about problems of voice and diction.

Motivation

There is a guiding or controlling idea to be found in the play as a whole; there is a guiding or controlling idea to be found in every speech and in every positive movement of the actor. There must be a reason for what is done.

In a play *A* does not merely cross the room; he crosses it because of something which is going to happen.

In a play the characters A, B, and C, speak three speeches. B's speech is not a thing by itself; it is prompted by the first speech of A, and it, in turn, prompts a speech of C.

The beginning amateur does not think about why he is moving or what he is saying; he does not connect these things with what has gone before and what is to follow. The result, even if he has created a good character, is that his work lacks meaning.

He has to learn to motivate, and he does this by asking: Why? —and trying to discover the answer.

A class in acting was rehearsing Gilbert Emery's farce, *Thank You, Doctor*. The scene was between the Doctor and a prospective woman patient. The Doctor said, "Then do I understand—?" and was interrupted by the woman with, "Let me explain. That is what I came for, to explain." [1]

The young actors were intelligent enough, but they spoke these two speeches with the same casualness, the same idea (or lack of idea), as the speeches which preceded and followed. The boy gave no evidence of having asked himself: Why did the Doctor say this speech? The girl had not questioned what was in the Doctor's mind as he said it.

A new idea had come into the Doctor's mind: he had begun to suspect the woman's veracity. This suspicion should have been in his speech. And the woman, aware of the Doctor's suspicion, through what he said and the way he said it, would have found the motivation for her speech and learned how she was to speak it.

In another rehearsal, this time of *A Woman of Character*, a girl, portraying a sympathetic, modest, altogether wholesome little woman, sat in a chair near center. In a moment another girl, representing a vulgar, unsympathetic divorcée, was to come in and sit in this chair. The first girl had to leave the chair and walk to the farther side of the room. This she did; but her walk was solely and obviously to make way for the second girl. The illusion of reality was lost.

The teacher-director called her back and gave her a reason for moving. He said to her, "The very mention of the arrival of this

[1] Reprinted by permission of the author.

divorcée does something to you; you dislike her; your impulse is, naturally, to avoid her presence. The best you can do is get up and move as far away as possible." The girl did as she was told, and the illusion was maintained.

A few speeches from the perennially popular fantasy *The Maker of Dreams* may contribute to this exposition of motivation. Pierrot has been talking about a girl whom he has seen and he concludes:

> PIERROT: . . . I wonder if it is possible for a woman to have a soul as well as such beautiful coloring?
> PIERRETTE: She was made up.
> PIERROT: I'm sure she was not. And how do you know? You didn't see her.
> PIERRETTE: Perhaps I *did* see her.
> PIERROT: Now look here, Pierrette, it's no good your being jealous. . : . [2]

The motivation here is not clearly apparent but is easily found. Pierrette is in love with Pierrot but he is a philanderer. When Pierrette says, "She was made up," this is not to be taken as the expression which is uppermost in her mind. She is jealous and her jealousy colors the speech. So her next speech, "Perhaps I *did* see her," expresses much more than the words indicate. There is motivation for her rising jealousy in the speech of Pierrot concerning the girl. Pierrette's two speeches, expressing jealousy in tone if not in words, react upon Pierrot and lead into his accusation of her. If there were no motivation in her tone, this speech of his would have no reason for being.

We take one more example, this time a number of short speeches from Louis N. Parker's short poetic play, *A Minuet*.

The Marquis is in his cell awaiting execution. The Marchioness, his wife, has come. The conversation has not been satisfactory. These speeches then occur:

> MARQUIS: This prison is no place for you. Farewell!
> MARCHIONESS: The room is ugly. I prefer my cell.

MARQUIS: Your cell!
MARCHIONESS: Of course. I am a prisoner, too.
   . That's what I came for.
MARQUIS: What?
MARCHIONESS: To die with you.
MARQUIS: To die with me?
MARCHIONESS: A Beauclerc could not fail.
MARQUIS: But——
MARCHIONESS: Yes?
MARQUIS: The guillotine!
MARCHIONESS: A mere detail!
MARQUIS: Pardon me, Marchioness, but I confess
    You almost made me show surprise.
MARCHIONESS: What less
    Did you expect of me?
MARQUIS: We'd lived apart
    So long I had forgotten—
MARCHIONESS: I'd a heart?
    You had forgotten many things beside. . . . [3]

The average amateurs, if left to themselves, will probably give some interpretation of these characters, will suggest that they are behaving under the stress of emotion, and may read the lines intelligently from a rhetorical point of view; what they will fail to bring out is the changing thought and feelings in the Marquis and Marchioness; what they fail to discover is the reaction of speech upon speech.

In the exposition preceding this scene we have quoted, we learn that the Marquis, a cynical, emotionless aristocrat—or so he says—is awaiting the guillotine; that his wife is a light-hearted coquette "with never a trace of middle-class emotion." From what follows later on in the play we learn that in reality these two people are hungry for love, hungry for all that their false living has denied them. We discover, then, that in our scene we are concerned with two unhappy human beings, facing death; we have here the moment when one, fearful and wistful but re-

maining outwardly emotionless, attempts to bring the two together once more; and we see in the reaction of the Marquis to the speeches of the Marchioness, his real humanity breaking through his affectation. So, the little scene takes on dramatic significance.

As we examine each speech we see what motivates it and how it calls for a definite dramatic reaction. The Marquis had been alone, awaiting death. His talk had been cynical. The Marchioness appears. She seems to be the sort of person he has described. She talks flippantly of affairs with other men. The Marquis is irritated. Courteously but firmly he says:

> This prison is no place for you. Farewell!

We know that the Marchioness has come for a definite purpose: to find and hold for a moment that love which they have buried under a veneer of snobbery. Yet, she dares not ask for this outright. She says, to test his reaction:

> The room *is* ugly. I prefer *my* cell.

There is no warmth in her tone, but the very words are startling enough to bring surprise. The Marquis stops short on his way to the door. The Marchioness words motivate his halt. He asks, puzzled and surprised:

> Your cell?

She sees the halt; she sees his surprise. Still she continues in the same tone:

> Of course. I am a prisoner too. That's what I came for.

Her words sound matter-of-fact; but they carry a growing significance to him. He does not move. The veneer begins to slip from him as he asks:

> What?

She replies simply; but her heart is beginning to beat rapidly, her mind is beginning to hope for success:

> To die with you.

He tries to understand what she has said. His affectation is fast deserting him. He repeats earnestly:

To die with me?

She replies proudly, calmly:

A Beauclerc could not fail.

Realization comes to him, and with it a horrifying thought:

But——

He begins the sentence and stops. His actions, his interest, the honest sincerity of his tone carry her hope higher:

Yes?

She asks the question, still hiding her emotion, urging him on to a fuller admission. With a voice no longer able to hide the emotion which has been roused within him, he gasps, almost trembling:

The guillotine!

She still plays her game. Her words still suggest the emotionless aristocrat:

A mere detail.

He pauses a moment. He has betrayed himself. Then he recovers—not completely but enough to acknowledge:

Pardon me, Marchioness, but I confess
You almost made me show surprise.

She has seen! She has discovered what is in his mind and heart! There is a touch of happiness, of pride, perhaps of love in the way she asks her next question:

What less did you expect of me?

In apology, in explanation, thoughtfully and regretfully he begins:

We'd lived apart so long I had forgotten—

She finishes the sentence with the question:

I'd a heart?

He makes no denial. Her affectation is gone now. She is speaking, not as the Marchioness but as a lonely woman:

You had forgotten many things beside. . . .   ·

The whole tone of the scene has changed. These people are no longer playing a game, they are no longer cold, mental, and clever; they are a simple, pathetic man and woman, ruled by their hearts, who begin together their search into the past for that happiness which had once been theirs.

We have found a motivation for the speeches and the scene now has meaning. Many scenes will be meaningless and without color if the actor does not analyze, in some such manner as we have been doing, the why and how of his lines and actions.

Feeling the Emotions

A rehearsal is in progress. The director cries out to an actor, "No, no! You're not living it, you're not feeling the emotion!"

The actor in innocence and honesty asks, "Should I feel it?"

The reply of the director, either "Certainly you should" or "Well, not exactly, but—" will be determined by which side of the famous controversy he is on—the controversy over feeling the emotions versus not feeling them. This controversy, we may add, has been in progress for a hundred and seventy-five years (it began with the Frenchman, Diderot) and no decision has yet been reached.

Should our student actors feel the emotions they are expressing or should they not feel them?

As we seek some sort of answer to this question, most of us will arrive at two points of agreement. The first point is arrived at through this simple reasoning: since the actor has to express emotion, has often to move his audience through his expression of emotion, he must either feel the emotion or make believe convincingly that he is feeling it; very few beginners can make believe emotional expression without experiencing the emotion;

therefore, it appears that *at some time* they must experience the emotion in order to have a pattern of behavior.

The second point of agreement is that we cannot permit the feeling to run wild on the night of the performance. An actor, ruled by his emotions, becomes a bull in a china shop. He may throw himself completely out of character and disrupt the other actors; his voice may go too high and too indistinct, his gestures become meaningless, his face show distortion, and his audience grow very uncomfortable at the painful sight.

This suggests that something should happen to the actor between the early rehearsals and the night of the performance: he has to learn to *act* emotions. Can he learn this?

First, he must come to understand emotions. He learns this by feeling them. It may be that an emotional experience of his own, a grief, a disappointment, a fear, can be recalled with such force that he can relive it. With continued trying, he may be able to induce a state of emotion almost as real as the original.

Once he has succeeded in reliving an emotion, he can repeat the experience. Then he can induce emotion and study his physical and mental reactions during the strong feeling. Now he is ready to make the same sort of experiment with his character. He tries to become aware of the natural bodily and vocal expression of his character in the given emotional situation.

As he rehearses this, he feels less and thinks more. Eventually he is making believe, and is reproducing the symbols for the expressed emotion. His mind is master now, not his feelings. There is a watch and ward over his emotions and he may be trusted in a performance.

This may sound quite difficult, but it is not; many amateurs can make the transition.

Most amateurs cannot or will not feel enough; a few feel too much. A director either has to be stirring his actors up so they will feel the emotion sufficiently, or quieting them down because their emotional expression goes beyond bounds. As suggested, most amateurs can be urged to feel more and still more without endangering the emotional sincerity of the play.

Overacting

Uncontrolled expression of emotion brings to mind the bad habit of overacting. The impulse to overact may be commendable. The actor wants to contribute, he wants to make his acting count. The impulse results in too loud a voice, too much gesture, a concentration which is unnatural. Characterization is lost, and the actor himself has lost the feeling of reserve power. His efforts attract attention, not to the play, but to his behavior. Most of all, the audience is disturbed and becomes uncomfortable. No further discussion of this bad habit is necessary. The admonition—do not obey that impulse to overact—should be sufficient.

Remembering and Forgetting the Audience

In talking about the theater sense, we spoke of a problem in relation to the audience, a problem which arises when the actor gauges his work by a sensitiveness to an imaginary audience. We will take up another audience question here: the question of whether an actor should remember or forget his actual audience during a performance. We are not referring now to the "feel" an actor has for his audience, but to conscious thinking about his audience as he plays.

One of our aims, when acting, is to produce an emotional response in our audience. Now this response may be aroused by our expression of the emotionalized condition of our character (emotion responds to emotion); or it may be aroused by some thought or idea in our lines and by our way of speaking them (even a recital of statistics may arouse emotion). The first condition is usually found in serious plays, the second in comedy.

If the actor is arousing his audience through his expression of emotion, he not only needs his conscious mind to serve as warden of his emotions, but he needs to be free from audience concern so that his emotion will ring true and his characterization be wholly convincing; but if he is arousing them through lines and delivery, a task which calls for greater attention to pause, inflection, stress —in other words, for a technical handling which cannot be com-

pletely determined before he goes on the stage—then he should keep his audience in mind in order to ascertain, at any moment, how the lines and action are getting over. In both instances he is sensitive to his audience, but in the second he is not only sensitive to it, but is consciously in touch with it. In serious plays the interest is cumulative and calls for little expression or interruption on the part of the audience, except in the climactic moments; in comedy, the expression of interest is constant and is frequently audible.

We can make, then, a general statement about remembering and forgetting an audience. The more likely a play is to be interrupted by an audience, the more the actor should have the audience consciously on his mind. Again, the more the playing of a part becomes a matter of directing and pointing lines, of gauging action by the response of an audience, the more the actor should keep his mind on the audience. On the other hand, when he is playing an emotional scene, or when his characterization is difficult and demands his close application, or when the success of the play does not depend upon outbursts from the audience, then he can use his mind as a conscious guard over his emotions and think little about his audience.

It is understood that these are general statements which must admit of exceptions.

Making the Audience Laugh

It is reasonable to assert that during the past season one hundred thousand amateur actors have rushed off stage after playing a comedy scene, and have declared in a high state of disgust, "What a dumb audience this one turned out to be! They can't get a joke if it's handed to them on a platter. Why don't they laugh?" And ninety thousand times out of the one hundred thousand, the audience cannot be blamed for lack of comedy reaction; they wanted to laugh, but the actors failed to put the comedy over.

Much has yet to be discovered and written on the subject of humor and its accompanying laughter. We do not know all we

need to know about why people laugh, why they should laugh but do not, and why they do but should not; but we have learned enough to say that in the theater, when the audience does not laugh, the fault generally lies with the director and his actors; we have learned enough to make several simple suggestions for the playing of comedy and farce.

Sometimes the audience does not laugh because the actors kill the laugh lines. An actor may kill a laugh line in several ways. First (and this is a common bad habit), he may drop his voice at the end of the line, the audience cannot hear all of the line, and there is nothing for them to laugh at; second, the actor may speak the line clearly enough, but just when the audience starts to laugh, a second actor breaks in with his speech and the audience, not wanting to miss anything, holds back its impulse to laugh, and listens; third, the actor may speak the line well enough, but a movement or a piece of business, coming at that moment, diverts attention and kills the laugh; fourth, the actor may not invite the laugh by giving his line the point, the emphasis, which brings the laugh.

The moment should be cleared for the laugh; nothing should distract from it; the line or piece of action should be distinct, emphatic, and paced and paused for the laugh.

There are two general kinds of laugh lines: those in which the laugh is in what is said, and those in which the laugh is in how it is said. If one character says, "She has a great future before her" and another replies, "She has a great past before her," all we ask is distinctness and an emphasis on the word "past" and the audience will do the rest; but when a character says, "She only happened to be driving by," the humor is not in the line but in what is in the character's mind when he speaks the line. The inflection, not just distinctness, must carry the line over.

A sure way for a comic actor to cease to be funny to an audience is for him to show reaction to the fun he is creating. Let him remember that he is not funny when he gets out of character and laughs at his own jokes or repartee.

The pause *before* the comedy line or action is sometimes as im-

portant as the pause following it. It is common knowledge that we like to laugh at the same jokes and situations. An old situation is suggested to us; there is a pause; in the pause our memories conjure up the old joke, we are pleased with the memory, we laughed at the joke once, and we anticipate laughing again. Then, when we are historically prepared, the line or action is given, and we laugh.

For instance, someone drops a banana peel on the stage. We smile in anticipation. We know about banana peels! A man comes on the stage, reading a paper and walking towards the peel. There is the pause; we wait, thinking, anticipating. The man steps on the peel and we burst into laughter. Even the oldest wheeze may bring forth a laugh if the pause precedes it. One character asks the ancient question, "Who was that lady I saw you with last night?" There is a long pause; then the other character answers, "That was no lady, that was my wife." And we laugh. What we thought about during the pause made the old joke funny.

At times the dramatist does not space his laugh lines far enough apart. He may have a clever laugh line, but two preceding laugh lines have been spaced so near it that the audience does not have time to recover from these and be in readiness for the third line which, we feel, is the important one. So the third line falls dead. It is, therefore, sometimes necessary to kill the laughs on one or more lines, by hurrying on and not giving time for the laugh, in order that the audience will be ready for the big line.

The actor playing comedy must keep one ear tuned to the audience; he must be ready for the laugh when it comes, for he cannot determine in advance just when and where it will come. When it breaks, he and all the actors on the stage must "hold everything" and give the laugh its full moment.

Unexpected Interruptions

The actor, playing either comedy or tragedy, should be ready to meet the unexpected. With the best of planning and the most careful checking, something may go wrong: the book on the center

table may not be in place, the actress who is supposed to enter just at the moment when the actor raises the glass to his lips may be late on her cue, a seat may break in the auditorium, bringing an unexpected laugh. There is one unpardonable sin which the actor can commit when such an accident occurs: allowing himself to be thrown out of stride by the accident and acknowledging it, not as the character but as himself. There is only one virtue we demand of him in this crisis: an ability to carry on with the play if it is humanly possible. Unfortunately, it is difficult to train oneself for such emergencies, and only experience makes the actor capable of handling difficult situations.

One other point: the illusion of life is destroyed for the audience if the actors ignore what would not be ignored in life. If a girl drops her hat in exiting, she should pick it up, in character, and not leave it for other actors to step over. If, accidentally, her bracelet falls off, the nearest man should pick it up, in character and give it to her. If a cup is brushed from the table, someone who can most easily do so should pick up the pieces.

Fortunately greater and greater care in production has reduced the possibilities of accidents and unexpected interruptions in the amateur theater.

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THE CHARACTER ON THE STAGE: PROBLEMS OF MOVEMENT

WHEN the actor has put his character on the stage, he may find several questions regarding movement which are still puzzling. These will be taken up in the present chapter.

General Recommendations for Movement and Business

In stage movement and business, remember that reality is not suggested by a complete representation of what would take place in real life. The essentials, plus a few significant details, are sufficient. Whereas a hundred strokes of a broom might be necessary for sweeping a room, ten strokes will suffice on the stage; whereas a person eating a sandwich might take twelve bites, two or three bites are all that are necessary. When the illusion of sweeping or eating has been created, the audience does the rest.

MOVEMENT AND BUSINESS WITH HAND PROPS

Eating should not be faked. If sandwiches are to be eaten, bites should be taken, chewed, and swallowed. Drinking may at times be faked, but it is well to have some liquid in the cup or glass. The business of eating and drinking must be timed with the lines; which means that drinking and eating must be practiced so that the actor does not start to take a bite just as he is about to speak, or find that he has a mouth full of bread when his cue is given.

This suggestion is applicable to any piece of business which

might interfere with speaking; the business should be rehearsed and timed so that there is no awkward pause for business before the actor is able to speak.

In this connection, a few words may be said about smoking. Be sure that the matches used will light easily; do not smoke too much —just enough to establish the illusion; and be sure the cigarette is out before it is left on the ash tray.

The mention of smoking and drinking brings up a question of good taste, perhaps of morals: Should we permit our actors to smoke and to simulate the drinking of liquor on the stage? Certainly, if there is objection on the part of the audience, smoking and drinking and anything else objectionable should be deleted; also, when, by the act of drinking, the thought of the audience is diverted from the play and the character in the play to the thought, "Look—there's, Mrs. Brown's boy Harry taking a drink," the drinking should be eliminated, no matter how ridiculous the prohibition seems.

A gun should not be fired on stage if it is possible to avoid it. The flash of the fire and the smoke from the wadding are too realistic. The firing on stage should be faked, the guns being actually fired from the wings. An audience is not keenly observant, anyway, when shots are fired.

All props should be rehearsed. How often has an amateur play been brought to a momentary halt by an actor experimenting with a parcel which has to be untied and unwrapped.

Entrances and Exits

The actor should be standing in the wings ready for his entrance cue several speeches before his entrance is to be made. It should be superfluous advice to warn him to stand where he will not be seen by the audience; it may not be superfluous to warn him not to stand where he casts a shadow on the scenery. Often a flood or strip light is placed outside the entrance for illumination. If the actor is not observant, he may take a position which casts a plainly visible shadow on the backing behind the doorway.

The actor should rehearse his entrance and time it. He must be

on the stage at a particular moment. This may mean that he must start his entrance several words or a full speech before the actors on stage have ceased speaking; it may mean that he must pause after they have ceased speaking before he enters. He cannot take literally the stage directions: "The Duke enters here."

Naturally, he should have a clear stage for his entrance. It is awkward to make an entrance and find someone barring your path. Also, he should not come to a halt just in front of someone else; he should stop either to the right or left of other characters on stage.

When exiting, it is good practice to carry the exit well off stage. We have observed amateurs who relax and get out of character just as they reach the door which, of course, momentarily breaks the illusion.

When the actor has to cross the stage for his exit, it is well to break the cross; not in the old way of striding to the door, turning for the last line and then hastily striding off (which, by the way, was a grand theatrical exit), but by a motivated turn or pause somewhere in the process of the walk.

Confusion frequently occurs when a number of characters have to make an exit. The confusion results from the fact that the order in which they are to exit has not been worked out. Like everything else that takes place on the stage, this exit has to be planned and rehearsed. Each actor should know whom he is to follow, and when, and at what distance.

Physical Struggles

A fight or a physical struggle of any sort often lacks reality. The struggle is not rehearsed during the early days of rehearsal for obvious reasons. So it is put off. Not infrequently it is the first night of dress rehearsal before the director says, "Tonight I want you two fellows to do your fight and fall in the second act." The result is that the fight is faked badly and there is now no time left to work it up properly.

Each actor should know every move the other actor is going to make; each movement and blow should be clear, well timed, and

should mean something. A blow may be started with sweeping force and the force checked just before the body is struck; blows should be struck on the upstage side rather than the downstage; muscles may be tensed, gesture and movement genuine, without any strength being exerted against the body of the opponent.

It is wise to hold a private rehearsal when working out a physical struggle for the stage.

EMBRACES

It is also wise to work out embraces and love scenes in private. The most frequent fault of embraces is their awkwardness. The lovers are often too far apart for the embrace; and they either stand erect, reaching out for each other, or bend towards each other from the waist.

Except for a comic effect, the two should face each other; in the case of each actor, one foot should be slightly in advance of the other; they should stand close enough so that their bodies will touch, without bending forward, during the embrace; and the man's downstage arm should be placed below the arm of the girl, with her hand on his shoulder or partly encircling his neck.

This is the conventional position for the embrace; there may be numerous modifications of it.

Anticipation

William Gillette, the actor, is given credit for the phrase "the illusion of the first time." No phrase is more expressive of that reality and spontaneity which an actor seeks to give to a scene which he has rehearsed to the point of monotony; of that situation in which, knowing exactly what he is going to say and do, he has to behave as though he did not know.

The actor knows what is coming next. He knows that in half a minute he is to step leisurely to the door, there to be surprised by his dreaded enemy who will shoot him dead. Yet, he must be relaxed, must laugh light-heartedly, as though he were not aware that in thirty seconds he must execute a difficult stage fall.

The question of preserving the illusion of the first time, of behaving as though the scene had never been rehearsed, is not so difficult as it is interesting. Even the beginner is usually able to drop naturally into this rehearsed make-believe, and more times than not he is able, without any conscious effort on his part, to preserve the illusion. Some amateurs, however, destroy this illusion by showing the audience that they are anticipating the action or speech which is coming up.

A girl whose business it is to sit impulsively upon a cushion at the foot of a couch, begins edging towards the couch and seems upon the point of sitting for several seconds before her impulse to sit should come. A man is roused to anger by the last words of another's speech, but the actor begins to register anger before anything has been said to make him angry. These are instances of anticipation; they break the illusion of the first time.

The suggestion we have to offer on this point is obvious; it is: do not visibly anticipate, do not betray what is about to happen. The ability to keep the audience from all knowledge of what is to happen depends on the actor's keeping his mind on the moment of the play he is living. Most actors do not find it difficult to break themselves of the habit of visible anticipation.

Selective Movement

An actor's movement should be selective. Though the right movement may be the result of a moment of inspiration, it is more often the result of conscious thinking. Selection dictates that the actor (or the director) *think out* gestures and movements which are constructive, fresh, and dramatic. We begin to *think* of gesture as we work into characterization; we *select* our gesture when we put our character into the specific action of the play.

Some actors walk about, gesticulate, move their bodies, and all is commonplace, trite, undramatic; others move a hand or turn the head slightly and a mind or spirit is revealed in the movement.

An actor, playing Mr. Peters in *Trifles,* kept looking from Hale to the other characters during Hale's long narration of the

discovery of the murder, kept nodding his head in affirmation and understanding throughout the story. His instinct may have been to contribute something constructive, but his movement was not selective. It was trite and distracting.

Another amateur, playing Dick Dudgeon in Shaw's *The Devil's Disciple*, slumped in his chair throughout the trial scene, spread out his legs, gesticulated in a blasé fashion; if his movements were selective, they were badly chosen. They did not proceed from character.

An actress, playing Lizzia in the opening pantomime scene in *Boccaccio's Untold Tale*, crossed the stage four or five times while she was on the stage alone before Violante entered. Her crossings were not selective; they may have been in character, but they were not effective nor calculated to interest the audience.

In a revival of Tom Taylor's melodrama *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*, the director gave most of the characters the same kind of entrance, the same sweeping gestures and swaggering walk. The movements lacked variety and soon ceased to be funny. Each character could have been given movements in keeping with his type of character.

On the other hand, in a production of *The Maker of Dreams*, at the place where Pierrot begins to compose a new song, he leaped to the table and Pierrette seated herself on the floor, in the position of an audience, below him. He played to her. The action was fresh, suggestive, and in keeping with the characters and the play.

In a production of *Hay Fever*, during the second act when David entered with Myra, he came in from a doorway upper left, walked with her diagonally to the right, completely circled the small table and divan at center, half circled it again, and came to a halt, downstage center. Meanwhile Myra was at his heels and he was talking vigorously. The movement was different. More than this, it was in the mood of the play which was farce comedy, it fitted the character of the absent-minded David, and it led beautifully into the scene which followed.

In *The Bank Account*, just at the moment when the revelation came to Frank Benson, the clerk, that his wife had taken out all

the money he thought he had in the bank, the actor playing Frank remained completely motionless save for his right hand (a hand which had been given importance in the play). The hand, cramped and slightly deformed, unconsciously moved forward and twitched slightly. This was the only movement on the stage. It was well selected and dramatic.

Selective movement means constructive movement. It proceeds from character and helps interpret the play.

Doing Nothing Effectively

We have mentioned before that when the actor is on the stage but is not speaking, he has a difficult piece of acting to do. In discussing this problem, we quote from Louis Calvert's *Problems of the Actor:*

"The power of listening to the speech of another in such a way that the audience are coaxed to listen also is one of the most direct means by which we are able to burn the simple, prosaic facts of the play into the minds of the audience; and it is a supremely important branch of the actor's craft. . . . In most cases we may achieve an end by remaining perfectly still with our eyes fixed on the speaker, thus focusing attention on him; sometimes it is better to obliterate ourselves from the scene entirely; again it is the listener who gives real point and drive to the other's speech, he may convey to the audience by his expression of horror or pity the depths of the suffering through which the other is passing; and often a line 'gets a laugh,' not because it is given in a clever way by the actor who speaks it, but because of the way it is received by the listener." [1]

The periods of apparent inactivity must be thought out as carefully, perhaps more carefully, than the periods during which he is speaking. These periods can have purpose, can be made constructive. The actor has to learn to listen in character, and to react in a way which will help the play. Doing nothing purposefully

[1] Louis Calvert: *Problems of the Actor,* Henry Holt and Company. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

and effectively is difficult and it often distinguishes a promising amateur actor from an unpromising one.

Movement and Scenery, Costumes, Lighting

When we come to problems arising from stagecraft, we come to those which do not appear until the last rehearsals when, let us hope, all other problems have been satisfactorily solved.

Much emphasis has been given stagecraft on the modern stage. Scenery, lighting, costumes, have assumed great importance. If the lighting is such that it handicaps the actor in his movement and expression, if the costumes are uncomfortable and prevent the freedom of movement which the actor feels he must have, if the arrangement of scenery and properties is such that his difficulties of action and projection are greatly increased, if, in brief, the stage staff has changed plans and gone merrily ahead without any consideration for the actor, then it is his privilege to rebel and become a very disagreeable person, if necessary, in order to have freedom to meet the demands which the play makes of him.

The actor should be well accustomed to the scenery before the time of dress rehearsal; yet, even between dress rehearsal and performance a stage manager has been known to make a radical change in the scenery.

In a college play given in the east, an actor, after a speech filled with tears and regrets, was in the habit of making his exit at lower right. On the night of the performance he made his speech and started to walk hurriedly off stage. He started, but he never got off, because a wood wing had been placed exactly at his point of exit. He tried to squeeze through but could not make it. The audience laughed. There was nothing for the actor to do but back onto the stage and find an exit farther upstage. The stage crew joined in the laughter. And the poor actor, of course, was blamed for the bungling.

An actor should examine the openings, try the doors, be sure of steps (especially of off stage steps) before he goes on.

He should make sure that the properties and furniture he is to

use the night of the performance are the same as those to which he has become accustomed in the last rehearsals. It is embarrassing to sit in a chair and find that it is four inches lower than the one used in rehearsals; it is puzzling to find that a table has been enlarged so that he has no space for the business he has planned around it. Sizes and shapes of the set props are sometimes changed without notice. Of course, his director should have told him about these things; but the director may forget. He should make sure for himself.

Especially should he make sure of his hand props. He is even justified in holding the curtain while he makes certain that the props he must use are on stage and in their proper places.

It will do no good to quarrel with scenery or properties or lights on the night of the performance. If a great dark shadow falls on the right of the stage where the actor has been accustomed to stand during an important piece of action, in all probability he, and not the stage manager, will be held responsible for his invisibility. In a performance, all faults and accidents are blamed on the actors. So, when properties, costumes, lighting, and scenery are complete, he must cooperate with his fellow workers and do his best to put across the play.

Most of the actor's problems can and should be met before the trying days of dress rehearsal. The problems arising from scenery and properties can be anticipated by the director who should, as far as possible, prepare his actors to meet them. When the actor's needs are not recognized by the director and are disregarded by the stage staff, he must, we repeat, demand his rights, not only for the sake of his acting in the particular play, but because in so doing he will hasten the time when actors will be given more of the consideration which is due them.

20

THE CHARACTER ON THE STAGE:
PROBLEMS OF SPEECH

As THERE are problems of movement which arise when the character is put in the play during rehearsals, so there are speech problems peculiar to stage presentation. The present chapter will analyze the most common of these problems.

Speech Entities

If the actor has learned by mastering breath control how to make thought groups where he wishes in his speeches, he is prepared to deal with the question of speech entities.

Speech units are of two kinds: those which lie within the speech of one character and those which are a part of the speeches of two or more characters.

Let us take one of Susan's speeches in Rachel Crother's *Susan and God* and mark it for speech units.

> SUSAN: I can't go back to being an ordinary woman again—// Lady Wiggam says I have a very rare power.// This summer has been wonderful for me. It's prepared me for higher—wider—// The meeting at Newport is going to be marvelous. Brilliant.// Heaps of important Americans—// and as for English titles—// Lady Wiggam herself is coming over.// [1]

These suggested units are independent of punctuation and represent a thought process during the speech. Too many begin-

[1] Rachel Crother: *Susan and God*, Random House. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

ning actors learn and speak a speech as if it were an entity; the result is a recital of memorized words. Finding the speech group and speaking these groups with variety of pitch, force, or rhythm, gives the effect of natural speech, clarifies meaning, and avoids monotony. Speech entities are not arbitrary groups but may vary somewhat according to the individual actor's interpretation.

Let us examine another bit from the same play to discover what we mean by speech groups within dialogue.

> BARRIE: Susan. Susan! //
> SUSAN: What are you doing here, Barrie?
> BARRIE: I want to talk to you.
> SUSAN: You can't.// Go away.// What time is it?
> BARRIE: Seven o'clock.
> SUSAN: That's outrageous.// Go away!// [2]

A moment's consideration shows the greater unity between "I want to talk to you" and "You can't" than between "Go away" and "What time is it?" though the last two sentences are spoken by the same character in the same short speech. Here again this grouping helps to clarify ideas, makes cues follow more naturally, and is an aid to tempo and variety.

Often a very dull speech or a lifeless scene can be made vivid by an application of this method of drawing the speech entities together.

Pitch and Character

The problem of pitch sometimes causes trouble. Suppose the actor is to play Marchbanks in Shaw's *Candida*. We say that he should have a pitch slightly higher than normal. Why? Because he is young, because he is high-strung, because he is physically weak. If the actor were to play Morell, Candida's husband, we would say that he should have a low pitch because his physical characteristics are just the opposite of Marchbanks', and he must give the effect of strength.

[2] Rachel Crother: *Susan and God*, Random House. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Various factors determine pitch: character, whether the character is emotionalized, the nature of the play itself. In general the characters in farce and comedy assume higher pitches than those in tragedy. It must be remembered that, whatever the pitch, the actor must use as wide a range as is reasonable to the pitch.

The Matter of Cues

There should be no lapses between speeches unless definitely designated by thought or emotion. Many an amateur play is not enjoyed because the actors do not pick up their cues promptly. A farce *must* have a rapid pace. Any play dies if it goes too slowly. The fault in the movement of a play lies too often between speeches.

Some actress says, "But I'm playing an old woman, and I can't talk fast." We are not asking you to talk fast; we are asking you to take up your cue quickly, then talk as slowly as your character demands.

To insure quick cues, the impulse for speech should be started before the preceding speaker has finished speaking. If John's speech is "This letter does not concern you," and the next speech is "I demand to see that letter" the second character should know the meaning of John's speech on the word *concern*, and should draw in his breath sharply and open his mouth; by the time John says *you*, out comes his *I*; not a second is lost and the play moves.

A play may be likened to a tennis match. The ball of speech must not fall; if it is not returned promptly, the play is halted.

Interrupted Speech

A type of speech often awkward in performance is the broken or interrupted speech. Here again, the interruption may be within a speech, as when a character interrupts himself, or at the end of a speech when another character breaks in.

A character named John has this speech: "Hello, Ned, I've had the most—— What are you doing with my violin?" An occasional amateur will read the speech: "Hello, Ned. I've had the

most. (period) What are you doing with my violin?" There is no illusion of reality, no interruption. The only way to interrupt oneself is to know what is to be interrupted. John must know what he started to say to Ned; perhaps it was "I've had the most amazing experience of my life"; but seeing Ned with his violin, he was so surprised that he broke off his intended speech to ask "What are you doing with my violin?"

Suppose that Ned's next speech is "Well, I just thought——" when John breaks in with "You shouldn't have thought anything of the kind." In this instance Ned should know what the playwright did not complete, the part of his speech cut out by John. He should start to say, and continue speaking until John interrupts: "Well, I just thought you wouldn't mind if I took it." Then, if for any reason John fails to interrupt, the speech is not left hanging in the air.

Another Way of Getting a Laugh

We have discussed making the audience laugh. There is one other way of getting a laugh, which is definitely associated with speech: a failure to harmonize the voice with the thought expressed. If Junior enters noisily and Father in a high, loud voice cries out, "Quiet! Your mother's asleep," the audience laughs.

The Pause

We have mentioned the pause as a means for securing a laugh. The pause can be useful in other ways. For instance, it becomes an effective means of indicating insincerity.

One man asks, "What do you think of the idea?" A second man replies, "I think it's marvelous." Unless he gives a strange inflection to the last word, we believe he means what he says. But let him answer, "I think it's . . . marvelous," with a faint hint of question on the last word, and we immediately doubt his sincerity.

This is using the pause as a trick. Used honestly, there is no surer means of emphasis. The pause, born of emotion, placed be-

fore or after a word or phrase of importance, dramatizes the idea as nothing else can. Before the word, it provides dramatic suspense; after it, it gives time for the dramatic force of the idea to deepen.

It may be used to show that the character is thinking, and to heighten the illusion of the first time. There is a speech of Thorvald Helmer in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* in which the pause is used in this way. Thorvald regards Nora and says: "And I don't wish you anything but just what you are—my own sweet little song bird. But, I say . . . it strikes me . . . you look so, so . . . what shall I call it? . . . so suspicious today——" [3]

The pause may be used to show emotion and changes in emotion. Under stress of emotion, Thorvald in the same play says: "Oh, what an awful awakening! During all these eight years— she was my pride and joy . . . a hypocrite, a liar . . . worse, worse—a criminal. . . . Oh, the hideousness of it!" The pause helps to make Thorvald's changing emotions felt.

There are, of course, useful pauses which are conditioned by the business of the play such as pauses in telephone conversations, in eating, or when the business is so important that words would only detract from the dramatic effect. The casket scene in *The Merchant of Venice* contains such pauses.

We must emphasize that pause does not mean a cessation of acting, a halt in the play. The pause must count for something; it must keep the ball of dialogue from falling.

Laughing and Crying

Many actors, even professionals, find laughing and crying difficult stage business. Of the two, laughing convincingly is more difficult than crying.

We accept the laugh of an acquaintance because we are used to it; but often this same natural laugh, heard on the stage, sounds unmirthful or unmusical. The actor may have to create a pleasing laugh for himself.

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[3] Reprinted by permission of Walter H. Baker Company.

The actor should remember that laughing is primarily an action of the diaphragm, as panting is. Air is expelled in puffs. When the air is exhausted, it is replenished in a gasp and the process continued. There must be no contraction of the throat. A good exercise to begin with is silent laughter; then an amused giggle which develops into a roar of laughter; then a sudden outburst which diminishes slowly. Once the process is understood and a free, unhampered laugh achieved, this basic laugh can be modified to suit character or emotion.

The physical response of crying is very like that of laughing. The difference of effect lies in the emotion back of the act. Crying is a more controlled process save when the emotion is one of anger or hysteria, when it becomes very like laughter.

Crying because of grief must be distinguished from crying because of pain. Pain causes a sudden outburst and noisy crying. Emotional hurt may begin with a moment of silence followed by quiet, rhythmic sobs that grow to a climax and subside. It is always better to do too little than too much. A few sincere sobs accompanied by convincing bodily behavior will gain sympathy where continued weeping may weary an audience. This does not mean an emotion which can produce sobs is of short duration. Too frequently the vocal recovery from stage crying is too abrupt. The evidence of tears in the voice lingers long after the sobbing has ceased. All first studies in acting should be from real life. This is no exception.

Speech Rhythm and Pace

All speech has rhythm. Rhythm is that related movement, that musical flow of speech which changes as thought and emotion change. It may be said to have a general pace: fast, moderate, or slow. General pace is determined by the nature of the play and by the nature of the character. Whatever the determined pace, the actor should be able to exercise a variety of rhythm within the pace.

Much comedy and most farce establish for all actors a swift

pace. Straight drama has a pace which suggests usual conversation. Tragedy calls for a slower pace, suggesting slow-moving fate.

Young characters, characters who are happy, or high-strung, or with physical lightness and mental quickness, usually speak rapidly. On the other hand, characters who are old, phlegmatic, heavy, dull, or sad speak more slowly.

We have considered two characters in Shaw's *Candida* in our discussion of pitch; let us think of the play in respect to pace. *Candida* is a comedy, but a comedy in which idea is important; it must move swiftly but not too swiftly for audience participation in the idea; so we agree on a pace slightly swifter than conversation. This pace will be increased when Morell allows himself to be goaded into argument, and will be slowed down when the self-possessed Candida takes control. What of the pace of the individual characters? In the light of our statement about character and pace, we can say that Marchbanks should employ a pace a little more rapid than the general pace, Morell a pace a little slower. And what of Candida? Healthy, happy, good-humored, unperturbed, she will set the slightly rapid, natural pace for the play.

Dialect

When we study rhythm in speech, we become aware that individuals have individual rhythm patterns. It is the rhythm pattern as well as vocal quality which makes us recognize our friends when we hear them without seeing them. Since most of us are imitative, these rhythm patterns tend to resemble each other in families, localities, and nations. It is this rhythm pattern which makes dialect so difficult.

Those who are willing to master the phonetic alphabet can learn to pronounce in the idiom of another language. The idiom can be conveyed inadequately by simplified spelling. But to pronounce words is not enough. Dialect fails to be convincing unless the speech rhythm is authentic. The surest way to reproduce convincing speech rhythm is to listen to the language spoken until the rhythm is clear, then to practice the rhythm until you have

mastered it. For those who live in a city, this is not too difficult. Somewhere a Greek runs a restaurant, a German has a pet shop, an Irishman walks his beat in the uniform of the city police; somewhere there is a Swedish maid, and a little old man who has retained some of his native cockney. If it is impossible to make direct contact with the dialect to be learned, the problem becomes acute. There may be a good linguist or language teacher in town who could help; or a traveler whose keen ear has recorded a number of speech tunes. If none of these helps are available, it would be better not to attempt a dialect part.

A supplementary aid to dialect may be found in certain speech books which treat the subject at length. One of the best is *Taking the Stage* by Crocker, Fields, and Broomall.

Forgetting Lines

What is one to do when, unaccountably, the mind goes blank and well-memorized lines suddenly cease to flow from the tongue? This is a situation that every actor finds himself faced with at some time, no matter how carefully he has taken trouble to avoid it.

He is lucky if some other actor sees his plight at once and comes to his rescue by whispering the word, or by finishing the speech and giving the next cue. If the other actor fails, there is the prompter; and, if the actor has learned to depend on the prompter at rehearsals, he will hear him now and carry on. These aids should come quickly or a disastrous vocal vacuum will be apparent to the audience.

No actor should rely on outside help; he should train himself to go on talking, even though he cannot command the words of his speech. Hearing his voice relieves his terror and almost without fail he will get back into the lines of the play after a sentence or two. If he *is* the character, there is little fear that he will not speak *as* the character; if he has memorized thoughts as well as words, he will express thoughts in harmony with the dialogue. This may be a bit confusing to the other actors but not so upsetting

as a prolonged silence which upsets the audience too. The audience, which seldom knows the lines of the play, will not be conscious of anything amiss. Most important, the play will go on.

Topping

Frequently we hear the director call out to an actor, "No, no. You're vocally wrong. Top that speech." Just what does he want of the actor? He desires the scene to build in interest and emotional intensity, he is after a climax; he knows that to secure this effect, a speech must exceed the one before it in pitch, pace, or force.

Sometimes topping is done by increasing loudness, but loudness should be employed only when the character permits it. It is usually better to depend upon lifting the pitch. If several speeches are to top one another, care must be taken to start the scene low enough to permit of a rise to the climax. The end of Act II of *You Can't Take It With You* presents a good exercise in topping. Here each character tops the preceding speech. The Man may, in character, use force in topping; the others, building up the scene, depend upon pitch. Variety is obtained by changes in pitch. The pace is broken only by Grandpa's pause in his last speech.

The scene:

> MAN: Keep still! Everybody in this house is under arrest.
> KIRBY: What's that?
> MRS. KIRBY: Oh, good heavens!
> GRANDPA: Now look here, officer—this is all nonsense.——
> DE PINNA: You'd better let me get my pipe. I left it——
> MAN: Shut up, all of you!
> (*G. Man enters carrying Gay, who is singing loudly.*)
> G. MAN: Keep still, you! Stop that! Stop it!
> MAN: Who's that?
> GRANDPA: That—— is my mother.[4]

Off Stage Cues

We. have emphasized the importance of taking up cues promptly. A special problem is presented by cues which must be given or taken up by someone off stage. This calls for close concentration, for it is not as easy to keep in the play back stage as it is before the footlights, but it is equally important because those on stage are dependent on the off stage speech.

Off stage speeches need careful rehearsing, for the timing must be perfect. The actor learns to count from a given word spoken on stage to his own first word and never varies the count once the right timing is set. If he makes an entrance with an off stage speech, he rehearses until he knows just how many steps are needed to carry him from a given point into the scene at exactly the right moment and on the right word.

To be slow with an off stage cue will rouse the ire of both cast and director as successfully as anything an actor can do.

21

MAKE-UP

OF ALL matters which are a part of the preparation of a characterization for the stage, the average amateur knows least about make-up. His knowledge on this subject is most rudimentary. He knows that the eyes should be lined and the cheeks rouged, that for age the cheeks should be hollowed, that wrinkle lines should be drawn near the mouth, eyes, and across the forehead, and there his knowledge comes to a complete and abrupt end. Even many directors have had only a meager training in making up, gained from a few weeks of class work in college with a little actual experience added here and there. Because of this situation, we feel it appropriate to begin this chapter with a short lecture on the art of make-up.

Necessity for Make-up

On the modern stage, make-up is as necessary a part of the completed production as costumes or scenery. It is necessary for two reasons: to offset the unnatural effects of lights on the face, and to project the features of the face into the auditorium.

LIGHT COLORS AND MAKE-UP

Stage lights vary in color. In the strong light of the stage, the natural color of the skin appears pale and pasty, and the natural outlines may appear wan, or worn out, or featureless. Add to this the fact that colored lights are almost universally used, and the effect of light on the stage becomes further complicated. Under

amber lights the natural cheek color will fade, under blue it will turn gray or yellowish.

LIGHT INTENSITY AND MAKE-UP

Lights vary in intensity. A stage brilliantly lighted may reveal many flaws in the face: a stage dimly lighted does not permit the natural features to carry.

LIGHT SOURCES AND MAKE-UP

The sources of lights on the stage may vary. The light may be thrown on the actor's face from above, from below, and horizontally. When the three sources are combined in about equal proportions, the natural face loses interest and becomes poster-like. When lights from above are used, the upper portions of the face —the forehead, cheeks, and nose ridge—are high-lighted, leaving deep shadows under the eyebrows, nose, and chin. When lights from below are used, the effect is of a foreshortened head, with a shadow across the nose and a high-light below the eyebrows.

Make-up, therefore, is a necessity because of the color, intensity, and different sources of the lights.

PROJECTING THE ACTOR'S FEATURES

Make-up is also necessary in order that the audience may see the actor's features. Nature did not make the features of the face to be visible, in detail, at a distance of fifty feet, and the features must be visible at this distance in the theater.

Purposes of Make-up

The purpose of make-up is two-fold: to suggest the character which the actor is playing, and to produce on the audience the reaction which such a character should produce.

SUGGESTING CHARACTER

It has been said many times that the face is the reflection of the soul. It is not to be supposed that we can suggest or express a soul

with a few colors and lines, but we can suggest something of the character's true appearance.

Nationality gives a face certain characteristics of color and form. Occupations mold a face, making one flabby, one pale, one hard and worn, one ruddy, one scarred. Certain conditions of life give one face the appearance of contentment, another the appearance of suffering. Age brings wrinkles and hollow cheeks and sagging jaws.

The amateur actor has worked hard to create his character. The eyes of the audience will be focused on the face of this character. The actor is twenty years of age, and his face is much the same as those of his fellow actors who range in age from eighteen to twenty-two. His face, therefore, as far as the art of make-up can change it, must be made over to suggest the character he is playing; not just any old man, or any pale-skinned man, but the specific old man or pale-skinned man that he is to play.

Producing the Desired Reaction

Characters in the play are designed to arouse a particular emotion in an audience; one is in the play to excite pity, another violent dislike, a third fear. The first impression the audience receives of the character is gained from his appearance, especially from his face which they are watching. Since this is true, the second purpose is to make up the face so that the audience will react to the character in the way demanded by the play.

The Steps in Working Out a Make-up

In working out a make-up, we should proceed from the more general considerations to the specific. We may begin with the nationality or occupation of the character.

Nationality or Occupation

Each nationality has distinctive features and coloring. The Oriental has slanting eyes, high cheek bones, flat nose, and a yellowish-brown color; the American Indian has high cheek

bones, a long hooked nose, dark eyebrows close together, thin lips, and a reddish-brown color; the Irishman is usually fair, with a long upper lip and a short nose; the Italian generally has an olive skin, regular features, dark eyes and brows, and full lips.

Occupations place their stamp on faces. A prize-fighter usually has a heavy jaw, and a broken nose or "cauliflower" ears; a farmer has a sun-tanned face and eyes surrounded by numerous fine wrinkles, the result of his being a great deal in strong sunlight; a sailor has a well-tanned, weather-beaten face with clear eyes and many wrinkles.

AGE

The next step after nationality or occupation is age. The face changes color and shape with advancing years. As a man grows older, the flesh slowly falls away from the face, leaving hollows around the eyes and beneath the cheek bones; the nose becomes thin; the flesh often drops down and hangs in folds below the cheeks and chin; many lines cover the face; and the skin becomes gray and flabby.

THE CHARACTER

Next comes the consideration of the individual character: whether he has had an easy life or a hard one, whether he is happy or sad, envious or contented; for these characteristics find expression in the face. If he is happy his face will appear more round and the lines of his face will seem to turn upward and outward. If he is harassed and has spent sleepless nights, his eyes will be hollowed with dark rings beneath them.

THE PLAY

The fourth step is the actor's analysis of the play in which the character is to appear. Is it comedy? Then in all probability the make-up will be realistic. Is it farce? Then he can exaggerate the comic features, making the nose a little redder than it would be, the lines around the eyes a little unnatural, the eyebrows arched for comic effect.

Again, is the play realism? Then the make-up must be realistic. But if the play departs from realism towards fantasy or expressionism or some other unrealistic form, then the make-up can depart from realism in conformity with the type of play; it may approach the fantastic or the grotesque.

THE THEATER

Lastly, the actor considers the particular stage and theater in which the play is to be given. If the theater is large, then it is obvious that a light, carefully blended make-up will not carry; if the scene is to be played in moonlight, he must avoid the use of rouge which will appear dark gray or purple; if only overhead lighting is used, he will have to make up for the high-lights and shadows which this lighting produces.

Each Face is Individual

It is complicated enough when one has to keep in mind the general purpose of make-up and direct one's attention to nationality, occupation, character, the play, and the theater; but there is a factor which still further complicates the process. This is the individuality of the face the actor must work on.

It might be possible to set down rules, to suggest just where hollows and high-lights should be placed, if we wish this or that effect, except that every face is constructed differently; and a deep shading above the eyes of one person may produce a quite different effect from the shading above the eyes of another. A face may have features which are good for stage make-up or bad; the eyes may be too far apart for the character or too close together; the nose may appear too long or too short; the features may be so delicate that they need refashioning or stronger emphasis if they are to carry.

So, taking all his theories about make-up, the actor applies them to a particular face; he experiments on the face until he knows it, until he knows how it must be changed for the special effect he wishes.

This brief lecture should tell us one thing: that make-up, if it is to meet the standard of the other parts of our production, cannot be a simple, thoughtless detail which we undertake at dress rehearsal and dispose of in a half hour of easy work. The study of make-up is one of the necessities for good production, just as is the study of movement, diction, costuming, or anything else which goes into the creation of the acted play; and the actor is obligated to spend many hours in practice before he can hope to become proficient in the art.

This chapter will not turn the actor into a make-up artist; it will only try to give him enough information and suggestions for his own practice and experimentation.

The Make-up Box

Several kinds of make-up are in use: liquid and dry, greaseless and grease make-up. Since grease paint make-up is used more than all the others, we shall confine our discussion to it.

The first question, naturally, is what do we need in the way of materials? We could put on a complete and satisfactory make-up with only five sticks of paint: red, yellow, blue, white, and black, plus a small can of Crisco, some powder, and a half dozen toothpicks; we could, that is, if we were clever at mixing colors and if our make-up did not call for such accessories as a bulbous nose or a full beard. On the other hand, we could have a box containing a hundred usable articles. We can, then, do well enough on a layout costing four dollars, or we can spend fifty dollars.

The collection and use of make-up materials is much like the purchase and use of fishing tackle. One trout fisherman will be satisfied with a meager equipment, another will load himself down with creel, bamboo and steel rods, rod cases, large fly books, -a net, and much besides; and both fishermen will be able to catch a good string of fish, or will not be able to catch any. The amount and variety of make-up material is likewise largely a matter of personal choice.

We shall start with a tin make-up box which we shall fill with a modest assortment costing about ten dollars.

Our first purchase is a half-pound can of theatrical cold cream. Fashions in creams come and go. At one time cocoa butter is preferred, at another time, Crisco or olive oil. Whatever our preference, our particular cream is applied to the face and massaged into the skin before the flesh colors are used. It protects the skin against any injurious ingredients which might be in the grease paint, and makes application and removal of the paint easier.

We need a box of cleansing tissue such as that popularized by the makers of Kleenex. These tissues, which are cheaper and more convenient than pieces of linen or cheesecloth, are useful in removing excess cream from the face before make-up is applied and in wiping off the make-up after the play.

Ground, base, or foundation paint comes in sticks and tubes. These paints are used for the general complexion color. The colors range from "clown white" through "natural flesh" and "deeper shade" to "healthy sunburn" and "sallow old age." The names printed on the sticks or tubes are not to be taken too literally. "Robust" may suggest "American Indian" in some manufacturer's line of paint! We lay in an assortment of eight or ten sticks of ground color.

Lining colors or liners are thin sticks of paint, of the same composition as the base paints, but coming in colors not usually found among the base colors. They are used for high-lighting, low-lighting, and wrinkles. They come in many colors, but we shall need only medium blue, dark brown, light brown, medium gray, white, and black.

For the application of the lining colors, we need a few lining sticks. These may be orange sticks, stumps (which are tightly rolled sticks of paper), or toothpicks. Some actors prefer one kind of stick, some another; we may take our choice.

Lining pencils may be used in place of lining sticks. These resemble ordinary pencils, but contain grease paint instead of lead.

A red liner may be used for lip and cheek rouge, but a small jar or stick of wet rouge (lip rouge) is better because it is more

transparent and more natural. Dry rouge is never needed except for occasionally touching up the face after it has been powdered.

Powder, which is applied to the completed make-up, comes in cans and boxes, and may be had in almost as many shades as grease paint. Three cans—a light, medium, and dark shade—will be sufficient.

The powder is applied with a large wool puff. We need several puffs in assorted sizes. A swan's-down puff is good for touching up the make-up. And a baby brush is useful in removing any excess powder from the face.

These are the fundamental materials; but there are other materials which are occasionally necessary and useful.

Many types of character call for beards. Beards on wire are unsatisfactory except in farce and burlesque; they look like false whiskers and nothing else. We might put in several mustaches built on gauze or silk (though these are relatively expensive). They are easily put on, easily trimmed, can be used more than once, and have a very natural appearance. Ordinarily, crêpe hair is used in making beards, mustaches, and eyebrows. It comes in braids and is sold by the inch, foot, or yard. Its colors comprise all the hair colors. We take a half yard each of gray, black, light brown, and dark brown to stock our make-up box.

Crêpe hair is stuck to the face with spirit gum, a resinous glue which comes in small bottles and smells strongly of ether. We will need a bottle of spirit gum.

If we still have a little money left, we may purchase a cake each of black and white mascara for coloring the hair and eyebrows, a bottle of liquid whitening for throat and arms, a tube of cosmetic for coloring the lashes, and a can of nose putty for changing the shape and size of the nose or chin. We will also need a pair of scissors.

Exclusive of these last articles, our purchases have cost us approximately ten dollars.

There are three leading manufacturers of theatrical make-up in this country: Miner, Stein, and Max Factor. Leichner's make-up, originally manufactured in Germany, can also be rec-

ommended. Each brand is a good brand, and an actor's preference is usually for the one with which he is best acquainted.

Make-up material may be purchased from the manufacturer, from costume houses, or from wholesale drug houses through their retail dealers.

The Make-up Table

The actor needs a table containing a well-lighted mirror. The mirror should have well-shaded lights above and at either side. For practice and experimentation, it is well to use colored lights, especially ambers and blues, so the actor may see, as he works, the effect of light color on the make-up.

The Process of Applying Make-up

Male actors should shave several hours, but not immediately, before making up; girls should be sure that their faces are clear of rouge and powder. Girls should protect their hair from the cream and paint by a band or cap. All actors should protect their clothing by an apron or a large square of cloth.

We begin by applying a coating of cold cream to the face and neck. The cream may be applied liberally so that all the pores are filled. It is worked in well. Then, with cleansing tissue, enough of the cream is removed to take away all greasiness from the face. Unless the face presents a greaseless surface, the make-up will appear greasy and will have a tendency to run together. The cold cream makes application and removal of the paint a much easier process.

The base color is then selected. This general complexion shade depends, as we have suggested, upon the age and type of character, and upon the specific light and theater conditions. If a stick is used, it is daubed on the face in eight or ten places, on forehead, cheeks, nose, upper lip, chin, and neck. If a tube is used, the paint is squeezed into the palm of one hand and the daubs made with the fingers of the other. We do not need very much of this base paint. A thick coating will feel and look like a mask.

The base color is blended in smoothly and evenly. One should not neglect the neck and ears; and he should be especially careful at the hair line. If an unpainted space is left between the hair and the base color, the skin will be high-lighted unnaturally; if too much is rubbed up to the hair line, a noticeable dark line results. Also, if the paint stops abruptly at the jaw line, the make-up will have the appearance of a false face.

Incidentally, if the make-up is to include mustache or beard, the parts of the face which are to be covered with crêpe hair should not be made up, for spirit gum will not stick to grease paint.

When the base color has been smoothed down evenly, the rouge is applied. We are using wet rouge for this make-up. If the rouge comes in a jar, a little is taken on the fingers and applied to the cheeks; if the rouge is in stick form, a few small spots are daubed on the cheek with the stick. In either case, the rouge must be spread and blended, the color carried towards the nose rather than down the sides of the face. Blending is very important; we should never be able to see where the red paint fades into the foundation color.

Rouge is not advisable for men. A ruddy flesh tone, somewhat heavier and darker than the complexion tone, may be used instead.

While there is still a shading of rouge or ruddy flesh on the finger tips, this color is applied just below the eyebrows and again blended. This is to counteract any high-lights which may result from strong footlights.

The lips are held slightly apart and are painted beginning with one dot on either side of the upper lip and one dot in the center of the lower lip. The lip line, of course, is not blended; however, a slight blur at the edge where the lips join the base color, is preferable to a sharp, hard line. The lips should not be made too prominent by a heavy coat of rouge.

Lining color of the shade desired is applied with a toothpick, orange stick, or stump. If the paint is dry, a little cold cream may be mixed in it for smoother and easier application. The eyes are lined, above and below, the lines coming together beyond the

outer corner of the eye, and extended outward about half an inch. The end of this line should not stop abruptly, but be blurred. Very dark eyes with heavy lashes may need little or no lining.

In most cases the eyebrows are lined, the stump being moved in the same direction as the growth of the hair. The eyebrows should not stop short, but should extend downward and outward, not too far, towards the temples. Again the finger should be used to blur the ends.

Each individual face usually requires one or two individual touches. Cheek hollows or small circles under the eyes may be made to disappear under a shade of base color which is lighter in tone than the general complexion. A weak chin may be improved by high-lighting the lower portion.

Also, if a beard is to be a part of the make-up, it is now put on and trimmed. The application and trimming of crêpe hair will be the subject of a later section.

When our make-up is complete, we powder it to remove the shine of the grease paint and to give it naturalness. It is advisable always to use a shade of powder which is lighter than the base shade; a darker powder obliterates any high-lights we have painted on the face. Care should be taken not to fill the powder puff too full. The puff should be pressed into the powder, then folded and patted so that the powder is forced into the puff. Now the make-up is powdered evenly and not too heavily. The neck and ears should not be neglected. Finally the face is gone over lightly with a baby brush and all excess powder brushed off. The make-up is now complete.

Unfortunately, a make-up looking very well at 7:45 may not look so well at 9:15. Certain skins "eat up" the make-up to a surprising degree; certain faces perspire so freely that the face is covered with beads of perspiration. A perspiring face must be powdered frequently; in fact, an actor should inspect his make-up between acts; if he does, he will generally find that it is in need of powder. This is where the swan's-down puff is useful.

The face which absorbs the paint is more difficult. Allowance can be made for this by putting on a heavier make-up in the first

place; between acts dry rouge may be applied to the powdered make-up, and a line redrawn here and there; but it is impossible, of course, to apply a base paint over a powdered make-up.

Grease paint make-up is not removed with soap and water; it is removed by first putting a layer of cold cream over the paint, after which the cream is rubbed in, and cream and paint wiped off with cleansing tissue or a make-up cloth. One such application is usually not sufficient. Two, sometimes three, applications of cream are often necessary before all the make-up is removed. Care should be taken to avoid rubbing the cream into the eyes, otherwise a sharp smarting sensation will be felt.

Normal skins are not injured in any way by an application of grease paint make-up. On the contrary, most faces feel and look as though they had had a beauty treatment.

Remodeling the Face

So much for the materials and the process of applying make-up. Now let us consider a number of changes which can be made in the face with the materials we have listed.

These will be no more than suggestions. They should lead the actor to study faces. For example, after reading what we say about furrows between the eyebrows, he can spend a day in observation of furrows, veryifying their direction, length, and number.

THE FOREHEAD

We begin with the forehead. To make the forehead appear higher and more prominent, the upper part of the forehead is

FOR HIGH FOREHEAD   FOR LOW FOREHEAD   CONVERGING WRINKLES   ARCHED WRINKLES

THE FOREHEAD

THROUGHOUT THIS CHAPTER, WRINKLE LINES WILL BE REPRESENTED BY ___
HIGHLIGHTS BY------ ROUGE BY ʌɪɪɪɪ   SHADOWS BY ▨▨▨

high-lighted with a base color lighter than the general face color; to make the forehead appear lower, the base color near the hair

line is darker and the area just above the eyebrows is high-lighted.

Dissipation, age, and worry make lines across the forehead. These wrinkle lines sometimes extend horizontally, sometimes in a curve, sometimes converging towards the center. The curved lines suggest worry or surprise; the converging lines give the face a sinister look. The lines are made with a stump or toothpick. Black and blue are not good lining colors; best are brown, gray brown, and reddish brown.

Wherever there is a depression in the face, there is a corresponding high-light; so, between the wrinkle lines, there should be a line of flesh color, not white, but several shades lighter than the general complexion. Most amateurs forget the high-lights.

The space between the eyebrows at the base of the forehead may be high-lighted to give the face a bland look; or this space may be drawn close together above the nose with lining paint.

During middle age, furrows which extend upward from the eyebrows into the forehead begin to make their appearance. These furrows are from one to many in number, are of varying length

FURROWS RUNNING FROM EYEBROWS INTO FOREHEAD

and depth, and extend in several directions. The painting of two furrows of equal length or two furrows extending straight upward is to be avoided, since they produce a comic rather than a realistic effect.

Once more we remind the actor that the flesh between the furrows is high-lighted.

THE EYEBROWS

Much can be done with the eyebrows. When the natural eyebrows are not too thick and bushy, they can be painted out and new ones painted on. To blot out the eyebrows, they should be coated with soap. When the soap dries, it causes the hair to adhere to the face, and the ground color can be applied more easily. The sensation produced by drying soap is not pleasant, but the result is worth the momentary discomfort.

A new eyebrow can be painted on either above or below the natural one, and the direction now changed to suit the character. A straight eyebrow gives the face a cold, determined look; an arched eyebrow, high above the natural one, gives the effect of great simplicity; a medium arch in its natural position gives the effect of haughtiness; low, heavy eyebrows suggest the criminal, or at least one who is not to be trusted; eyebrows that slant downward towards the nose give a villainous look to the face; eyebrows

NATURAL EYEBROWS

EYEBROWS PAINTED OUT—NEW ONES PAINTED ON

"VILLAINOUS" EYEBROWS

"WORRY" EYEBROWS

BROUGHT CLOSE TOGETHER THE EYEBROWS

PART BLOCKED OUT

that start high and slant downward away from the nose give the expression of worry.

Strange effects can be gained by blocking out only a portion of the natural eyebrow—a half inch at the inner end, or a half inch at the outer.

The eyebrow can be thinned by painting out the lower or upper part of it with paint. A sinister effect can be secured by thinning out most of the eyebrow with paint and sticking a bit of crêpe hair on the eyebrow over the inner corner of the eye.

The eyebrow can be thickened either by grease paint or by gluing on crêpe hair. It can be made bushy and overhanging by daubing it thickly with the liner and pushing it downward. It can be grayed for age. An effect of age can be obtained by daubing a spot of white in the center of the natural eyebrow, and pulling the hair downward.

The actor should beware of the black lining stick for eyebrows, except for characters in farce and melodrama.

THE EYES

A chapter could be devoted to the eyes. As a preface to the suggestions we may offer, let us advise the actor again that much more

can be done through facial expression and through the feelings which animate his acting than through the application of paint and powder. This is especially true of the eye. The staring eye, the narrowed eye, the eye that has lost its power of sight, even the tearful and the evil eye are largely the result of facial expression and feeling. Make-up, however, can make the eyes visible to the audience and aid them in their expression.

In lining the eye, except for a special effect, the line is not carried all the way around the eye. A brown-gray or brown (seldom black) line is drawn above the eye, close to the lashes, beginning

STRAIGHT MAKE-UP   CROW'S-FEET   PUFFY UPPER LID

EYE SUNK INTO   BAG BENEATH   TO GIVE STUPID
SKULL   EYE   APPEARANCE
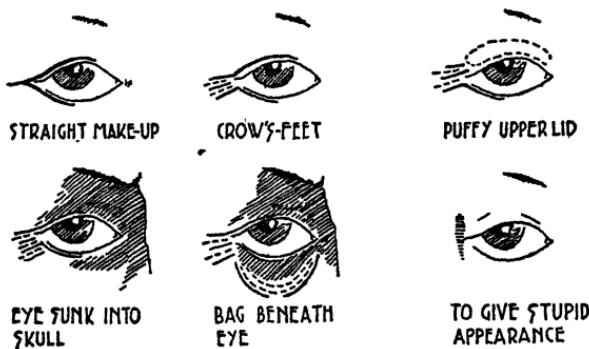
THE EYE

at the inner corner; another line is drawn beneath the eye, beginning at about the center and extending outward; these lines are joined about one-eighth of an inch beyond the outer corner of the eye and continue on as one a short distance farther. If this line runs upward, an Oriental look is given the eye; if it runs downward, a sad expression results.

To enhance the appearance of the eye, the upper lid is shaded. The color of the shading, in general, should be that of the natural color of the eye: for brown eyes, a brown shading; for blue eyes, a blue shading. The shading is strongest just above the lash, and is blended into the base color.

Another effective touch is a bit of rouge, well blended, just below the eyebrow and above the inner corner of the eye.

If the natural eyes appear to be too close together, we can begin

the lining farther out on the eye, and extend the shading above the eye beyond the outer corner of the natural eye; if the eyes appear to be too far apart, this process can be reversed.

The eye can be enlarged by drawing the lines around the eye farther from the lashes, and extending them farther beyond the outer corner of the eye. It can be made smaller by drawing the lines close to the lashes, completely around the eye, and without the extension beyond the outer corner. This, however, tends to give the eye a round, animal appearance.

To make the eye look puffy, the upper lid may be high-lighted instead of shaded; if the upper lid is naturally puffy, the puff will tend to disappear if the lid is darkened and blended.

To give the eye a stupid look, a short vertical line, slightly blended, can be drawn just beyond the outer corner of the eye.

The eyes can be sunk into the skull by shading heavily around the eyes. The shading is darkest at the inside corners, is carried across the eyelids, and becomes lighter near the outside corners. The shading follows the outline of the eye socket in the skull.

As age approaches, crow's-feet begin to spread in a fanlike shape from the outer corner of the eye. These are usually three in number, sometimes more, and are made with the stump or toothpick. They, too, should be high-lighted.

Bags sometimes appear under the eyes. These are made by darkening beneath the eye, outlining this shading with a darker line in a half circle, with a high-light just above the dark line. A dissipated look can be given the eye by smudging the bag lines in the center of the bag.

An effect of tearful eyes can be produced by a soft red line above and below the eyes, close to the lashes; an effect of sadness by graying the eyelids and lining the eyes with gray; the illusion of age is aided by a light gray line below the eye.

The eyelashes may be "beaded" either with cosmetic or grease paint. If the end of an artist's stump is covered with grease paint, and the paint melted in the flame of a candle, it can then be easily applied to the lashes. The actor must be careful that the paint is not too soft, or it may run and fall into the eye.

THE CHEEKS

We think first of rouging when we think of cheek make-up. The color on a man's face is applied high on the cheek; a spot of deep flesh is placed above the cheek bone and is blended outward

PLACING ROUGE IN DIFFERENT AREAS
THE CHEEKS

and especially upward above the outer corner of the eye. Cheek color placed close to the nose tends to narrow the face; placed farther out, tends to broaden it; extending the color up and down the face tends to lengthen the face; extending it across the cheek

SHADOW AREAS   LINING AND HIGHLIGHTING
SHADING, LINING AND HIGH-LIGHTING THE FACE FOR AGE
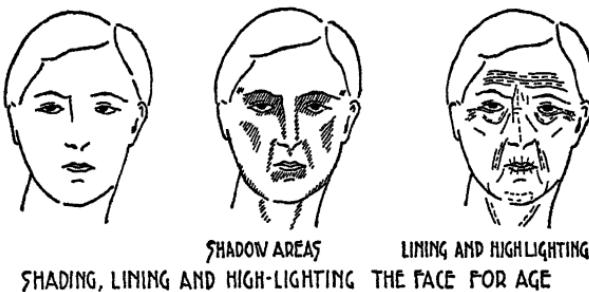
tends to shorten it. With age, the color retreats from the vicinity of the eyes and is more blotchy, more irregular in shape. An alcoholic may have a blotch of red above the cheek bone.

The actor is warned again about using rouge on the cheeks of men; a deeper flesh color is better.

If we wish to suggest that a woman's cheeks are obviously painted, we use a rouge lighter and pinker than a natural rouge, and we make it a little heavier than usual in the center.

Some of the natural hollow in a cheek may be made to disap-

pear by high-lighting the hollow. To make the cheek appear full, a small wad of cotton or a thin slice of apple is placed inside each cheek. This gives the desired effect and does not interfere greatly with speech.

The conventional sunken cheek is made by applying a triangular patch of gray brown to the cheek, one line of the triangle being just below the cheek bone. The lower sides of the triangle are blended well; the side beneath the cheek bone may be only blurred to suggest the line of the bone. When the gray-brown hollow is made, a little reddish brown mixed with the general complexion color is placed over the gray brown. This is to give the hollow the effect of the face color in shadow. A hollow should never, of course, be made over a bone.

The cheek bone may be raised and emphasized by placing a high-light line just above it; this line should be along its upper ridge. The cheek bone may also be made more prominent through the use of nose putty. The use of this putty will be explained later.

THE NOSE

Unfortunately, with the actor asked to face front much of the time, our stage lighting, instead of bringing out the shape of the

LENGTHENED BY SHADOW LINES AND HIGH LIGHTS | LENGTHENED BY PAINTING EYEBROWS HIGHER | SHORTENED | CROOKED
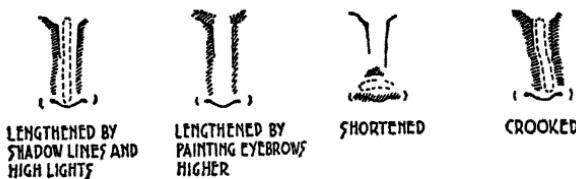
THE NOSE

nose, often takes from it much of its outline. Because of this, it is desirable, even in juvenile or straight make-up, to run a reddish-brown shadow line, well blended, along each side of the nose ridge, beginning at the eyebrows and fading out near the tip.

A nose can be lengthened by the use of this shadow line, which in this case runs the full length of the nose to the tip; and by the

use of a high-light line running the length of the nose ridge. A very short nose can be lengthened by blocking out a portion of the eyebrow near the nose, painting the eyebrow higher on the forehead, thus starting the nose shadows and high-light higher on the face.

The nose can be made thinner by bringing the shadow lines closer to the nose ridge.

The nose can be shortened by placing a dark shadow under the tip, and by not accenting the shadow lines and high-light above the tip.

The nose can be "pugged" by drawing a dark shadow line horizontally across the nose above the tip, blending the upper portion of the shadow; and by high-lighting the tip of the nose.

The nose can be flattened by high-lighting the tip with a horizontal line, carrying the high-light the full width of the nose; and by placing a darker shadow line above and below the high-light.

The nose can be crooked by bending the line of high-light down the nose ridge to the left or right; and by bringing the shadow lines close to the high-light, following its bend. Reversely, a naturally crooked nose may be made to appear straight by painting a straight line, with straight high-light and shadows, on the natural nose.

The nostrils can be distended by small glass tubes; or by painting the edges with a line of reddish pink.

The nose can be modeled into almost any shape and size desired through the use of nose putty which will be described later.

THE MOUTH

The lips are very expressive. Thick lips express grossness and sensuality; straight lips, sternness and coldness; lips that turn upward, a happy disposition; those that turn downward, sorrow or cynicism; colorless lips, age or illness.

Thick lips are made by rouging beyond the natural lip lines. The effect may be heightened by high-lighting below the lower lip and shading below that. Thin lips are made by covering the

upper and lower portions of the lips with base color; straight lips by flattening out the cupid's bow.

To increase the width of the mouth, straight red lines, not very thick, are carried out a short distance beyond the corners of the mouth. To decrease the width of the mouth, short, curved shadow lines are drawn, vertical to the face, and just at the ends of the lips. The lines curve outward, and the lip line is at their center. Just beyond the curved lines, small high-lights are placed.

To suggest happiness, shadow lines curve upward from the corners of the mouth; to suggest illness, the lips are painted gray;

LIPS THICKENED   LOWER LIP PROTRUDING   LIPS THINNED   'CHORUS GIRL' LIPS

HAPPY EXPRESSION   SAD EXPRESSION   MIDDLE AGE   OLD AGE
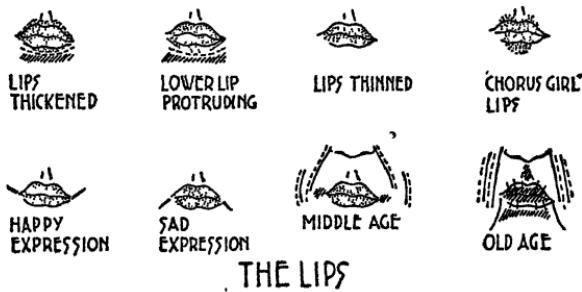
THE LIPS

to suggest extreme old age, the lips are grayed and a number of shadow lines and high-lights are drawn vertically across the lips and a quarter of an inch beyond.

The lower lip can be made to protrude by rouging beyond the natural line, high-lighting the lower edge, and drawing a heavy shadow under the lip. This lip is further emphasized by thinning the upper lip. Reversely, the upper lip can be enlarged and rouged and the lower lip thinned into a line, thus producing the effect of an overhanging upper lip and a receding lower lip. The small depression just above the upper lip may be shadowed, which tends to throw the upper lip out from the face.

With the approach of age, lines begin to appear, extending from the sides of the nose downward to the region of the mouth. These lines may be deep or shallow, long or short; if their direction is outward, the face appears full, and is given a happy ex-

pression; if their direction is straight downward to the corners of the mouth, the face is given a pinched look.

Lines also form at the corners of the mouth. Short lines, outward and downward make the corners droop. Long lines from the corners, curving outward towards the jaw line, give an effect of fullness.

Each time we line the face, we must remember the high-lights. The high-lights are ordinarily above the shadow or line, since the more natural source of light is from above. Shadows and highlights are more effective in a large theater than fine lines.

The Chin

The chin can be sharpened and emphasized by a patch of light flesh tone; it can be rounded by high-lighting the lower portion, with a semicircle of shadow above it; it can be made to recede by shading the lower portion and using no high-light; it can be lengthened by high-lighting the central portion and running the high-light downward and under the chin.

A square chin is suggested by drawing a shadow line horizontally across the lower portion of the chin, blurring the upper edge of the line and high-lighting above it, and blending and deepening the line below the chin; this chin can be further emphasized by vertical lines extending upward from the jaw line, and placed a short distance beyond the corners of the mouth.

To make the chin and lower portion of the face look thinner or more pointed, broad lines of high-light, beginning beyond the cheek bones, are drawn diagonally down the face to the chin; the chin is high-lighted; and the portion of the cheeks and jaws beyond the high-light are shaded. It goes without saying that this requires careful blending.

To give the face a double chin, a semicircular shadow line is drawn, beginning in the lower portion of one cheek, extending downward and inward and just under the natural chin, then curving upward to the other cheek. Again, do not forget the highlights, especially between the natural chin and the shadow line, for they suggest a fold of flesh.

THE JAWS

The jaw line can be sharpened and emphasized by running a shadow just below the jaw edge with a thin line of high-light running just above. The jaw line can be softened or obliterated by using a light rouge near the jaw line, and high-lighting rather

JAW LINE
SHARPENED

JAW LINE
SOFTENED

THICK NECK

THIN NECK

JAW AND NECK
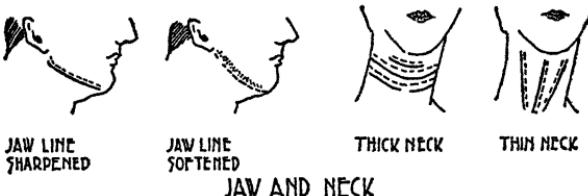
than shadowing just below it. The actor should study faces to see how the vertical lines run upward from the jaw line between the mouth and the ear.

THE NECK

A suggestion of a fat neck can be given by the use of horizontal shadow lines. These lines should be about three quarters of an inch apart, should curve upward at the sides, and should have high-lights drawn between them.

A skinny or emaciated neck is suggested by drawing thick shadow lines diagonally downward with high-lights painted above the throat tendons. We know how the tendons become more pronounced in old age; therefore, with increasing age the tendons should be high-lighted stronger and the shadows between them should be darker.

Neck hollows can be made with reddish-brown grease paint. The necklace of bones, sometimes visible on a thin person, can be made less noticeable by rouging the prominences and applying a light base color to the hollows.

THE HANDS AND ARMS

Even if the actor remembers to make up his neck, he may forget his hands. The hands are a much-used medium of expression and should not be neglected.

The hands ordinarily are painted a shade lighter than the face. The hands do not need to match the face in color; they should match the character and his occupation. A coal miner may have a pale, sallow face and red, swollen hands.

If the arms are bared, they should be painted either with liquid paint or grease paint (preferably the liquid color). An arm can be made to appear emaciated by using a light base color with shadows where the hollows would naturally come, and high-lights above the bones and tendons.

Thin hands are suggested by high-lights down the center of each finger, with a darker line on each side.

The fingers may be made to appear longer by running the high-lights from the back of the hand and down the full length of the fingers.

Rouge and high-lights on the knuckles tend to make them appear swollen. A young workingman may be made up with his hands reddened with a ruddy base paint and with his knuckles high-lighted.

Dark-blue veins can be drawn on the backs of the hands and extending up the arm, though these probably will not be seen beyond the sixth row.

HAIR AND WIGS

Wigs should not be worn if the actor can possibly use his or her own hair. If the actor is to use his own hair, the director had better warn him some days before the performance not to get a hair-cut, otherwise he will, as sure as fate; and a young man with a close hair-cut on the stage looks positively naked above his make-up.

The actor should remember that many effects can be obtained through the dressing of his own hair—especially if he is willing to forego having it cut for a week or so past his customary time. The hair may be plastered down, or puffed up, or parted in the middle, or curled. A change in hairdressing sometimes brings a surprising transformation.

Long before dress rehearsal an actress should experiment with her hair and determine the style best suited to her character. And

one suggestion: when possible, her coiffure should follow the head line.

The hair can be colored with mascara which comes in black, brown, and white. A small brush is dipped in water, rubbed on the mascara cake, and brushed on the hair. Mascara can be satisfactorily removed with water.

The hair at the temples can be grayed with mascara, cornstarch, or grease paint. If grease paint is used, the hair at the temples should first be stroked with the stick of paint, then combed in order to separate the hair and give it a more natural appearance.

The entire head of hair can be grayed with cornstarch or white powder. Cornstarch is preferred. The actor should make sure that the back of his head is powdered and powdered evenly.

Since powder and cornstarch make the hair look dead, aluminum paint powder can be sprinkled lightly over the cornstarch (with a salt shaker) to give it a sheen. Care should be taken that the paint does not get into the scalp. This paint can be dusted off the hair easily.

Bronze powder will give a touch of life to brown or reddish hair, and gold powder to blond hair.

When wigs are ordered from a costume house, be very specific in your descriptions of them.

The natural (and in this instance the correct) way of putting on a wig is to fit it first to the forehead and then pull it back over the head. The natural way of removing a wig is not the correct way. We should not push it up from the front but should draw it up by the hair from behind.

If the wig is loose, or if there seems danger of its coming off during the play, it may be made to set tight to the head by first tying a band of tape around the head and then pinning the wig to the band with small hairpins.

If the wig is too large, a small pleat can be taken in it back of the ears, or at the back of the wig just over the elastic band; if it stands out from the face, it can be adjusted with invisible hairpins, or by a small pleat near the temples, or by sticking it to the face with spirit gum or adhesive tape.

When using a bald wig or a wig with a high hair line, the actor sometimes has difficulty in blending together the natural forehead and the wig forehead, and in getting rid of the line where the wig meets the face. This wig line must fit snugly across the forehead, otherwise it will always show.

There are various aids in hiding the wig line: forehead wrinkles may be made to hide it; a lock of hair may be combed forward over the brow, covering part of it; several layers of grease paint on the line may hide it successfully.

The cloth part of the wig can be painted with grease paint. The shade of paint should be lighter than the general complexion shade. Grease paint is removed from wigs with gasoline.

A good wig can be combed, brushed, and arranged much as if it were the actor's own hair. As a rule, wigs do not have the luster of human hair. A little brilliantine or vaseline will give life to them.

Wigs should be handled carefully at all times; this request for careful handling has been made by directors and writers for a number of years, but, up to the present, there is little evidence of its having been obeyed.

Mustaches and Beards

If mustaches on gauze are used, the spirit gum is applied to the upper lip, allowed a minute to set, then the mustache is pressed into place, held in place with the fingers for another minute, and trimmed.

If crêpe hair is used, the process is a little more complicated. First, a section of the crêpe hair is unbraided and pulled apart; it may be combed out with a coarse-toothed comb. Then it is wet with cold water, stretched, and left to dry. This will take the curl out of it. Next, it is cut into small sections, for neither a beard nor mustache is put on in one large piece.

Then the spirit gum is applied to the upper lip as for a gauze mustache. Now, when a small section of the hair is to be put on, we have to bear in mind the direction in which the hair grows on the face. For instance, hair in mustaches does not grow straight

out towards the sides of the face, but downwards towards the mouth. The hair under the chin grows outward and upward.

One side of the mustache is put on, the hair growing downward and outward; then the other side is put on. A small space just under the nose is left free when making a mustache. This gives the mustache a natural look, and does not restrict the upper lip in talking.

Lastly, the mustache is trimmed with a pair of scissors to the desired size and shape.

The beginner often applies crêpe hair too thickly. A little goes a long way; a few inches from the strand are sufficient for a full beard and mustache.

Beards are put on in the same way as mustaches. The beard should not be stuck too close to the lower lip. The beginner sometimes sticks his one or two sections of hair to the vertical part of the chin, but neglects the under part, so that in profile the beard is unnatural and too thin. A section is stuck to the chin, running downward; another section is pasted under the chin, running outward and upward. The two sections are patted together, and twisted into a point or cut to the desired shape.

The edges of the beard are thin. Sometimes a lining pencil can be used to thin the edges on the chin and along the jaw line; or extra bits of crêpe hair can be glued on and trimmed closely.

There are so many varieties of beards that it would be futile to try to enumerate them all. The actor can study his character, decide upon the style of beard, find a picture of that style, and experiment.

In removing mustaches and beards, the crêpe hair is pulled off and the spirit gum loosened with cold cream; in case the cold cream does not loosen all the spirit gum, a little rubbing alcohol can be applied.

Nose Putty

Nose putty comes in small tins. In make-up, it is applied to the face first, even before the cold cream.

A little cold cream is spread on the fingers, a small piece of the

putty is broken off and is kneaded until it is soft and pliable.

If the nose is to be built out, it must be free from grease paint and cold cream. The putty is placed on the nose where it adheres to the skin. The nose is now built up and molded as desired; it can be lengthened, broadened, given a hook, bent or tiptilted. Except for farce and burlesque, the nose should not be enlarged beyond naturalness; therefore, as we said about crêpe hair, a little goes a long way. Touching the fingers with cold cream occasionally makes the modeling easier.

The most difficult part of the process is thinning the edges of the putty where it meets the skin. This requires patience and practice. When the thinning is done, no ridges must show.

When the nose is shaped and the edges blended, it can be painted with grease paint with the rest of the face. There are two points, however, about painting the nose: one, no cold cream is applied to the putty nose before the grease paint is put on; and two, the grease paint on the putty nose must be put on carefully, with the fingers, and not with the stick.

Nose putty is not uncomfortable and is in no danger of coming off during a performance. To remove it, the putty is pulled from the nose with the fingers; and what still adheres to the skin can be rubbed off with cold cream. The putty can be saved and worked over for the next performance.

Nose putty can be put to other uses such as building out the chin, making warts, heightening the cheek bone, and pushing forward the ears. The difficulty in using it on the chin is that the skin of the chin moves so much that the putty lumps up and wrinkles.

A Few Miscellaneous Hints

A scar can be made by applying liquid court-plaster (which draws up the skin), then painting it.

Teeth can be blocked out by the use of tooth wax or, better still, enamel.

A dimple can be made by a reddish-brown line, about a quarter of an inch long, and slightly blurred.

Crêpe hair may be stuck to small pieces of adhesive tape which

have been cut to size and shape. Then the two pieces of tape may be glued to the face quickly with spirit gum to form the two sides of a mustache.

The tops of the ears can be brought to a point or made larger by the use of nose putty.

The effect of unshaven cheeks can be secured through the use of gray-blue paint rubbed into the complexion color; or crêpe hair may be stuck to the face and trimmed closely. Some directors use granulated tobacco which is stuck to the face with spirit gum.

In old age, hollows sometimes appear at the temples. They can be simulated by a small round spot of shadow.

Some actors and directors prefer to use a camel's-hair brush for lining. The lining paints must generally be softened with a little cold cream before they can be applied to the face with a brush.

Making Up Specific Characters

Let us apply these suggestions for remodeling the face to the make-up of two specific characters. For the first, we choose an old English cabby. He is disreputable and dissipated and weather-beaten; about sixty years of age; partly bald, with iron-gray hair. He has lived a hard life, but he has had enough to eat, and more than enough to drink. He has found life good, has enjoyed it, and still has a twinkle in his eye and a humorous story for those who will listen. We want him to be liked, if not admired, by the audience.

Our actor who is to play the part is twenty-two years old. He has a fairly full face, but as we look at it we see that his nose is a little too thin, and something will have to be done about it.

Our first step is to build out this nose. We knead a small piece of nose putty until it is soft, and place it on the bridge of the nose, working it outward towards the cheeks and downward towards the tip. We may have to add a little more for the tip because we want a rather bulbous nose. The nose is now shaped and the edges of the putty blended.

Next we apply cold cream to the face except where we have

built up the face with putty. We rub off the cream and put on the wig, which is iron gray and shaggy. We select, as a base color, ruddy old age and apply it to the face. At just about the wig line, however, we begin to lighten our complexion color, so that at the hair line (which is well up on the skull) the complexion is a light pink.

We blend the color well. Despite several applications of paint, we cannot quite hide the wig line across the forehead. We will remedy this later.

We study the face and see that one other bit of remodeling should be done: the chin is not in character. A square chin would be better. So we draw our horizontal shadow line across the lower portion of the chin, and deepen and blend the shadow below it.

Next, since our cabby is an alcoholic, we put a touch of dark rouge high up on each cheek bone, and another spot on the nose. We do not blend the cheek rouge very carefully, but we blend the nose rouge well. Now we are ready for shadows and high-lights.

We shade around the eyes, throwing them deeper into the skull; we place a small shadow at each temple; we shadow from the eyebrows down each side of the nose, for a short distance, and not close to the ridge; we place a shadow under the lower lip; and a thin shadow line beneath the cheek bones.

We take up our reddish-brown liner (which we have mixed from red and brown) and add our lines. We draw our wrinkle lines on the forehead, extending them well out to broaden the face. We find that we can follow the wig line with one of these lines, so that the wig line is no longer noticeable. We draw two furrow lines from the inner edges of the eyebrows, one deep and the other light, and both slanting inward as they go up from the eyebrows.

A line is drawn downward and outward, beginning at each side of the nostril, and extending below the mouth. It is blended until it becomes a shadow, then another line is drawn down its center.

We paint a dark semicircle under each eye, and give the eyes the usual crow's-feet. These extend upward and outward rather than downward.

Now we high-light between and above our lines and shadows. We draw lines of rouge and high-light along the jaw bone and blend them in order to give the jaw more of a jowl than a sharp line. We remember to high-light above our dark semicircle beneath the eye. Then we smudge with a finger stroke the lower part of the shadow and high-light for dissipation's sake. And we remember our high-light above the horizontal chin shadow.

One last touch to the eye. We place a spot of white in the center of each eyebrow, and brush the hairs forward and downward.

Now we see that the mouth is not right. (We had thought it would carry with no make-up at all.) The lips are painted out with base color; then they are closed tightly and a thin shadow line is drawn between the lips. At the corners of the mouth, the lines are bent upward.

Since our character is going to wear an old scarf wound around his neck, we do not need to make up the neck. But the hands are reddened, with some shadow between the fingers, and the knuckles are swollen by the use of rouge and high-light. Then face and hands are powdered and the make-up is complete; and, if we have done our work well, it should be the make-up, not of any old man of sixty, but of a definite character.

For our second character we select a woman about fifty-five. She has lived much of her adult life alone, perhaps in an isolated cottage on the New England coast. She has grown introspective and superstitious. She is thin and withered, but we must not think of her as a hag. We want to sympathize with her, even if we do not warm to her or like her.

The girl who is to play her is young, blonde, of ordinary height and build, with an oval face; and, fortunately, she has long hair.

Without reporting the make-up process step by step and in such great detail as with the cabby, we make her up as follows:

Her hair is brushed straight back and bound in a simple knot. We use sallow old age for complexion color. The color is carried well down on the neck. We hollow her eyes, especially the inner corners, hollow her cheeks, giving them the conventional triangular shadow, paint in shadows and lines from her nose almost

straight down towards and beyond the corners of her mouth, and shadow beneath her lower lip.

We may high-light faintly her cheek bones, chin, and the central portion of her forehead. In order to thin her face, we high-light with broad lines, beginning beyond the cheek bones and extending diagonally down the face to the chin; and we shadow beyond this high-light.

The forehead is lined and the furrows drawn between the eye-brows. The outer portion of each eyebrow is blocked out and the eyebrows are curved downward and outward with light brown. We give her crow's-feet, slanting the lines downward. A thin dark line is drawn under the eyes; none above. The corners of the mouth are turned down slightly. Most of the color is removed from the lips with a gray liner.

Instead of blotting out the jaw line, we accentuate it with a shadow line, which does not stop abruptly at either end but is blended into the ground color at the chin and below the ears.

We give her neck a hollow spot, and lines and high-lights to suggest the tendons.

We thin her hands in the manner described earlier.

We gray her hair (as it is blond) in streaks with cornstarch. Then we powder her face, hands, and neck with a light powder and her make-up is finished.

Having learned the materials of make-up and the methods of application, the best practice is to study actual faces and pictures of faces, and attempt to reproduce the characteristics found in them.

22

SCENERY: MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION

As in the past, a theater still stands or falls by its acting; but today, compared with *some* periods in the past, directing has assumed larger importance and at times is able to give the production reality and power despite the shortcomings of the acting; and, compared with *most* periods in the past, stagecraft is fast becoming as essential to the complete stage play as are acting and directing.

Present-day stagecraft includes the designing, construction, and painting of scenery; the creation of lighting effects and the arrangement and manipulation of lights; the designing and making of costumes; the assembling or making of properties; and the construction and operation of various stage devices. These several divisions of stagecraft are represented in almost every school production, no matter how simple the staging.

In the larger school organizations, all the divisions are under the supervision of one person who is generally called the technical director. This is a desirable situation because it relieves the teacher-director of much responsibility and detailed supervision. The situation, however, does not extend to all schools. In both colleges and high schools the director at times has to be not only technical director but chief carpenter and electrician.

Even though this is true, we shall treat the divisions as separate departments, assuming that there is a headship to each, and referring to the technical director or scene designer, although he may be, in many instances, the same teacher-director of whom we have been speaking all along.

We shall begin with the division of scenery and take up a number of questions which come to the mind of the apprentice or prospective technical director who is approaching his task as a beginner.

What Should Scenery Do?

The first question is not a question which the beginning theater worker generally asks, so we are asking it ourselves. It is: What should scenery do?

Scenery is not as old as either the actor or the play, but it has already reached the age of two thousand and several hundred years. It has not, however, been accepted as an integral part of the play during all these years. For many years it was looked upon, not as a contributing factor to the acted play, but as something which spoke for itself and called attention to itself; it was striking or effective or colorful, whether or not the play called for color or sensation in the set. Today, however, scenery is one of those units which helps create a proper environment for the action, which presents a right background for the play.

What Are the Kinds of Scenery?

THE DRAPERY SET

Necessary economy, a lack of knowledge, or a lack of carpenters and painters often prevents the amateur theater from having a new set of scenery which provides just the right background for every play produced. The most common substitute for scenery found in high schools is the "cyclorama" or drapery set. This consists either of a cyclorama (enclosing the back and sides of the stage) or of a back drop with two or more sets of wings or leg drops, sometimes on travelers. The material is some soft fabric which takes the light well: monk's cloth, flannel, duveteen, or velvet. It is in some neutral shade, is suspended from battens, and hangs in folds.

Drapery sets have their good points. Certainly they are more pleasant to look at than the old painted sets of a generation ago,

especially if they are well lighted. They provide a more logical background for speakers and the glee club and the commencement program (for the school theater must be used for many things besides plays). There is no problem of moving bulky pieces of scenery onto the stage from the outside, and no problem of changing scenery; and once the initial expense is met, all scenery expense is taken care of for a decade.

But there are disadvantages to such a background. It becomes monotonous. The shape of the acting space is always the same. Such a set usually confines the plays presented to those with interior settings (occasionally there is in addition to the drapery set a sky drop at the rear of the stage). It does not suggest the environment which many modern plays demand. While *Twelfth Night, Hay Fever*, even *Cradle Song* might be played satisfactorily before such drapes, *Winterset, Noah, Mary Rose, The Emperor Jones* need something more than a rectangular, neutral background.

The drapery set is really not a set; it is a substitute for a set, possessing the advantages of simplicity and economy, but permitting very little opportunity for experimentation or for providing a suitable environment for the action.

THE ADJUSTABLE CURTAIN SET

A kind of scenery growing out of the idea of drapes, but more adaptable, more suggestive of varying shapes and sizes, is the curtain set. It, like the drapery set, may be used on stages having no fly loft.

With three lines of full-length curtains and three lines of top borders (hanging in folds), augmented by curtain tormentors downstage and half a dozen flats (made of the same curtain material tacked on in folds, and containing door and window openings), exteriors and interiors of many shapes and sizes can be suggested.

For this arrangement, two curtains are hung on wires at the sides and just upstage of the front curtain, in the position of the tormentors. Six wires are stretched across the stage from side to

side, in pairs, and of sufficient height to be out of the range of vision of the audience. On a small stage, twenty-two feet in width and seventeen in depth, the first pair of wires is stretched about five feet back of the front curtain; the second pair, nine feet; the third, thirteen. The front wire of each pair will, in each case, carry the border; the rear wire, the full-length curtain. Borders
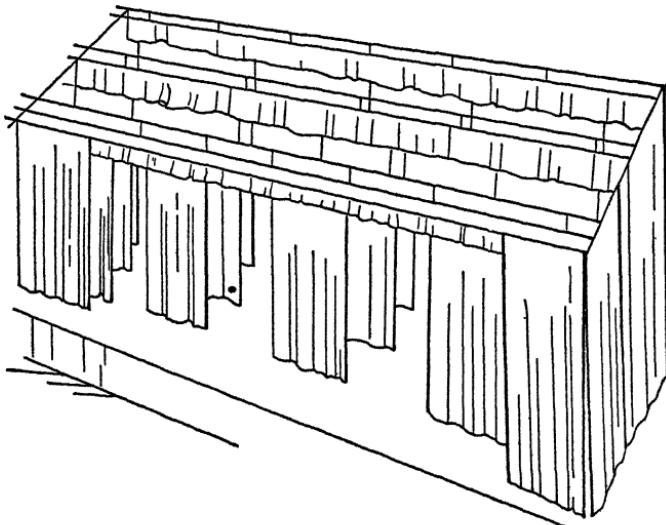
ADJUSTABLE CURTAIN SET

and curtains run freely on small rings or harness snaps; four curtains are suspended from each rear wire; the total width of each line of four curtains is sufficient to extend across the proscenium opening, hanging in folds.

The curtains are made of some soft fabric: a light-gray cotton flannel will serve the purpose.

The flats, in this instance, are four feet in width so that they may be set up and down stage, forming sections of the sides between the rows of curtains, as well as in the rear walls. Besides the wires and curtains just mentioned, wires may be stretched from front to rear stage, in the line of the side walls of an interior set; and curtains which form the walls may be attached to these wires.

The adaptability of such a set reveals its usefulness. The time and expense of painting are eliminated; new settings, varying in size and shape, may be devised at no expense whatever; with an adequate lighting system and an ingenious technical director, many interesting arrangements can be made—arrangements which
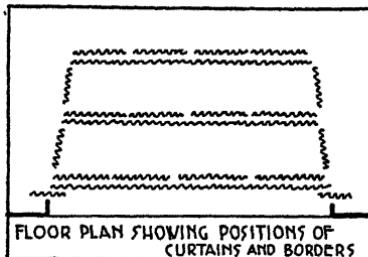
FLOOR PLAN SHOWING POSITIONS OF CURTAINS AND BORDERS
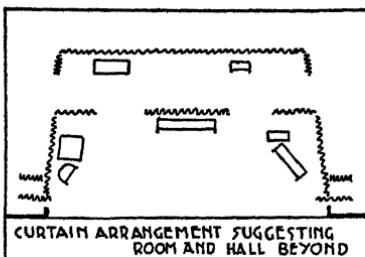
CURTAIN ARRANGEMENT SUGGESTING ROOM AND HALL BEYOND
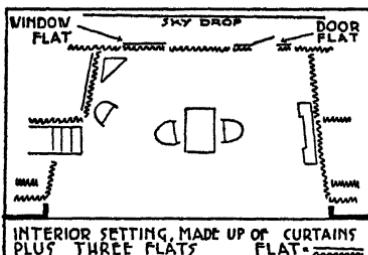
INTERIOR SETTING, MADE UP OF CURTAINS PLUS THREE FLATS   FLAT = ~~~~~
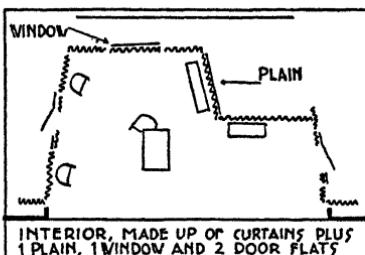
INTERIOR, MADE UP OF CURTAINS PLUS 1 PLAIN, 1 WINDOW AND 2 DOOR FLATS
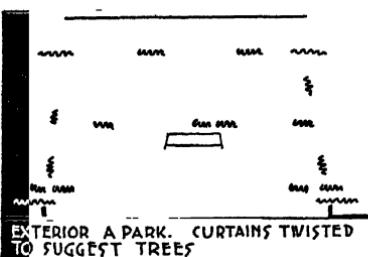
EXTERIOR A PARK. CURTAINS TWISTED TO SUGGEST TREES
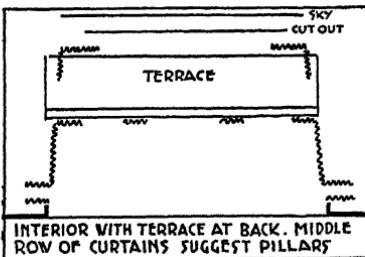
INTERIOR WITH TERRACE AT BACK. MIDDLE ROW OF CURTAINS SUGGEST PILLARS

FLOOR PLANS FROM ADJUSTABLE CURTAIN SET PLUS 4 CURTAIN FLATS

may suggest in form and size, if not in color, the environment for the action. Such a curtain set is especially usable in a class-room theater in which plays are constantly being given for in-structional purposes.

Seventeen years ago a curtain set, such as we have described,

was installed in a small classroom theater in a college at a total cost of thirty-five dollars. During these years, less than ten dollars have been spent in repairs and cleaning. The set has served as a background, and in many cases as a quite adequate background, for more than seven hundred scenes and plays; and it has not yet finished its days and nights of usefulness.

THE UNIT SET

The curtain set is, in a way, a unit set which is convertible into a number of sets. It differs from the usual conception of a unit

SLIDING FLAT
SKY DROP
CURTAIN DROP

MOVABLE TWO-FOLD

PERMANENT SET –
COMPOSED OF STATIONARY
BACKWALL, PLATFORM, STEPS; TWO
DROPS (CURTAIN AND SKY). THREE
SLIDING FLATS. AND SIX MOVABLE
TWO-FOLDS.
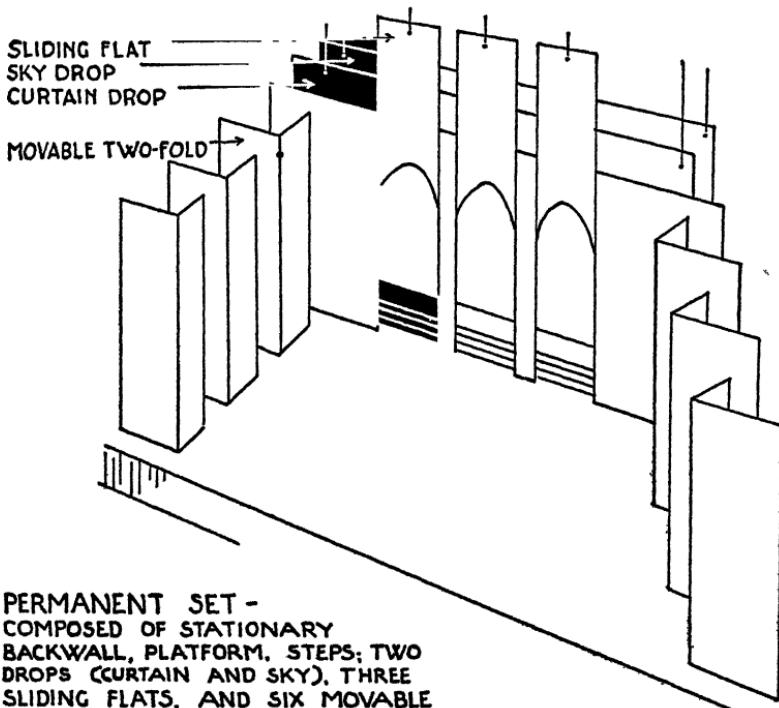
set in its structural elements. The usual unit set consists of a number of wooden frames, covered with cloth and painted.

The unit set, then, consists of a number of especially constructed units, representing walls, pillars, archways, steps, etc., and painted

some neutral color. This set is designed and constructed to be used throughout an entire play, whether the play calls for one, two, or a number of settings.

The unit set becomes divided into what may be called the permanent set and the convertible set. In the permanent unit set,
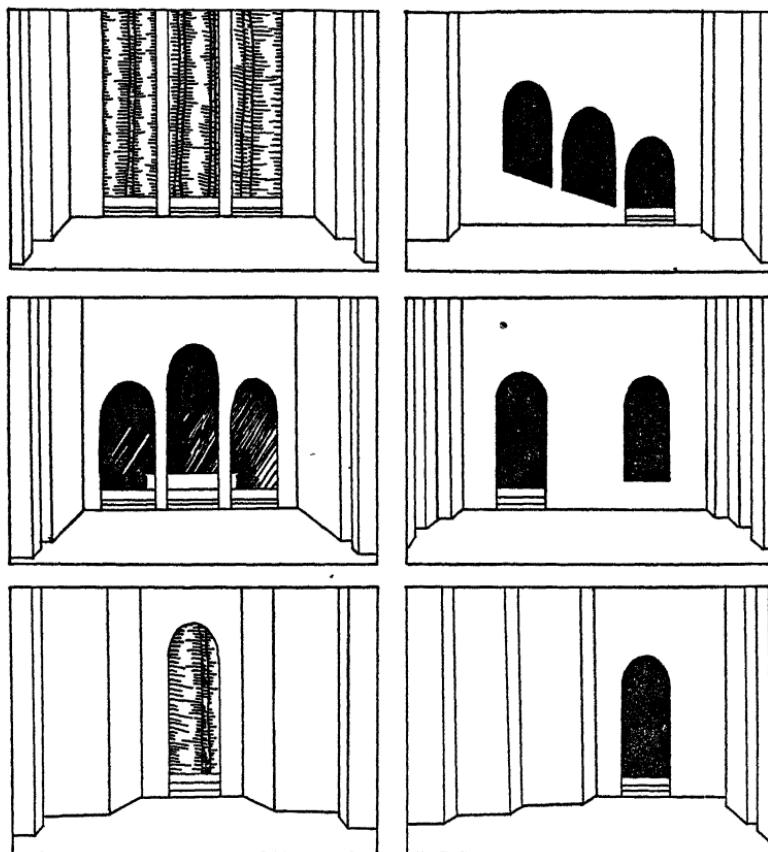
SIX ARRANGEMENTS (OF MANY) MADE FROM THE PERMANENT SET

there is a general basic design; a permanent frame for the entire set is built and set in place on the stage, and this frame is not changed during the play. Changes are made by adding or subtracting details within the general frame: a window becomes an

entrance, a platform and steps in an upstage corner changes the form of the room, a tapestry is hung over an opening, a line of pillars placed across the stage near center gives the suggestion of a passageway rather than a room.

In the convertible unit set, there is no permanent structure on

A 1,2
14'
5' 5' 5'
TWO 3-FOLD FLATS EACH 5'X14'

B
14'
4' 4'
ONE 2-FOLD, EACH 4'X14'

C
14'
3' 3'
ONE 2-FOLD, EACH 3'X14'

D 1,2,3,4,5,6
SIX 2-DIMENSION PILLARS EACH 12'HIGH

E
12'
3' 8'
2-FOLD HOUSE FRONT FACE,8'X12' SIDE 3'X12'

F
8'
4' 2'
SCREEN BEFORE GODDESS, 4'WIDE, 2'DEEP, 8'HIGH

G
8'
4'
SANCTUARY OF GODDESS 4'X4'X8'

H 1,2
4' 12' 2'
TWO PLATFORMS 4'WIDE, 12'LONG, 2'HIGH

I
5' 6' 2'
ONE PLATFORM 5'X6'X2'

J
2' 7' 6'
RAMP 6'WIDE, 7'DEEP, 2'HIGH

K
4' 6"
PLATFORM 4'X3'X6'HIGH

L 1,2
18"
3'
TWO SETS OF STEPS 5'LONG,18"HIGH

M 1,2,3,4
FOUR IDOLS ON PEDESTALS

N
7' 7'
18'
GROUND ROW 18'LONG

CONVERTIBLE SET: UNITS TO BE USED FOR ARRANGING THE THREE SETS OF BRIEUX'S 5-ACT PLAY FALSE GODS.

stage during the entire play; rather, there are a number of units which are rearranged and reassembled for each scene. At stage right, a wide flat will be taken out and a doorway from left stage will be inserted in its place, an interior will become an exterior

by taking out sections of the rear wall and putting in a stone balus-
trade and a ground row of shrubbery.

The unit set has its advantages and disadvantages. It may be
made to suggest the environment of the entire play, if not of all
the individual scenes, in line and color. It takes up less stage space

UNITS OF CONVERTIBLE SET ARRANGED FOR 3 SETS OF FALSE GODS.
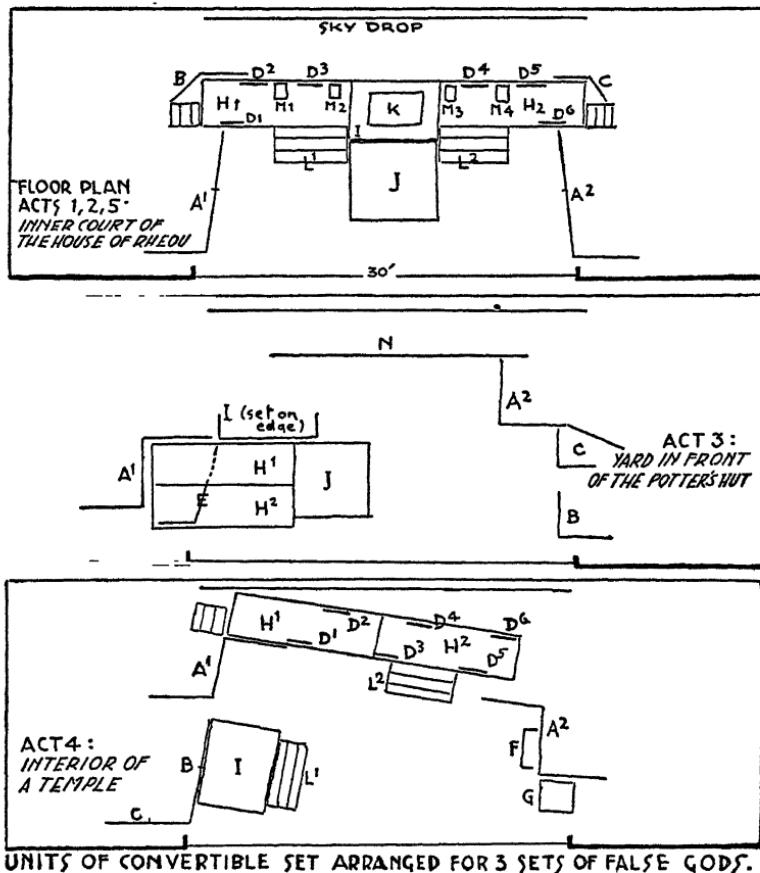
when stored and requires less time for shifting than individual
sets. Properly designed and painted, it can be made to give the
play a visual unity.

But, to be effective, it has to be carefully designed; the changes

cannot be too obvious; and it ceases to fulfill its function if the audience begins to wonder, "Well, now, how are they going to shift that door and those steps around for the *next* scene? I'll bet they put them at right center where that hanging is!" The set
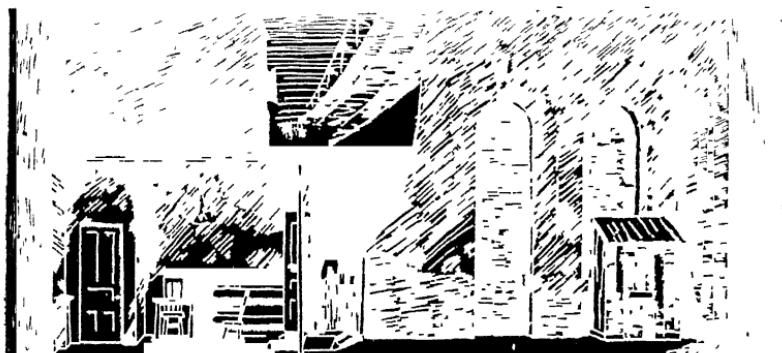
MULTIPLE *SET* (*REALISTIC*) FOR THE TWO *SETS* OF MAXWELL ANDERSON'S WINTERSET, DRAWN FOR STAGE WITH 40′ PROSCENIUM OPENING.
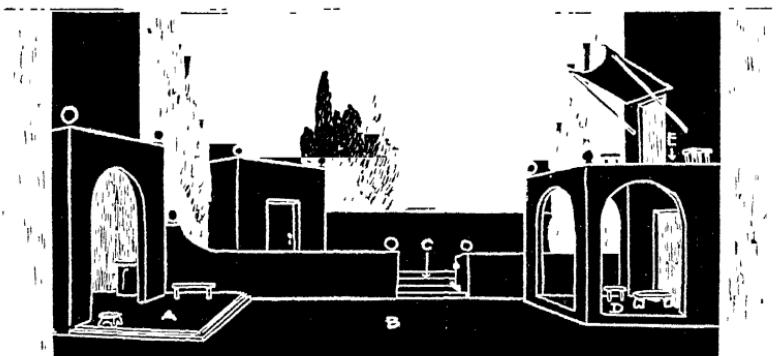
MULTIPLE *SET* HAVING FIVE ACTING AREAS: A, B, C, D, E. *SUCH* A SET MIGHT BE ADAPTED TO THE PLAYING OF TWELFTH NIGHT.

fails when the audience ceases to follow the play and begins to speculate on the mechanics of the staging.

THE MULTIPLE SET

By a multiple set is meant a unit set remaining unchanged throughout the play. But this set suggests or represents not one

but several locations, the several locations being used as specific acting spaces for specific scenes.

For instance, in a production of *Twelfth Night*, we might build a façade and raised porch at right, a street with a wall downstage center, a raised garden upstage behind it, another open building at left stage, with an arched section suggesting a cellar below, and a flat roof above. The house at right belongs to Orsino, the one at left, to Olivia. The lights illuminate now one section of the stage, now another, as the Orsino, Viola, Olivia, or Sir Toby scenes are enacted. It is obvious that a wide stage is necessary for a multiple stage set.

DOOR
BACKING

BACK
DROP

INDIVIDUAL SET -
MADE UP OF A NUMBER
OF INDIVIDUAL FLATS.

TORMENTOR
OR RETURN
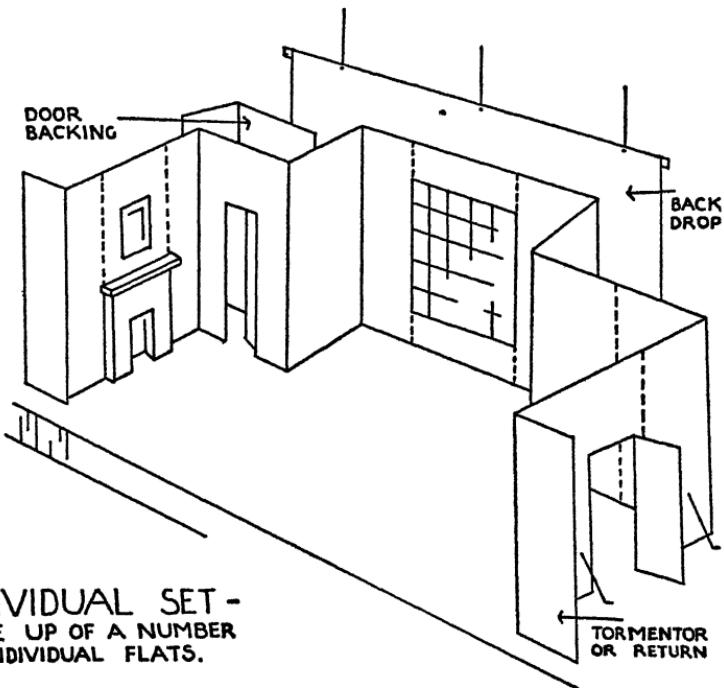
THE INDIVIDUAL SET

The commonest set is the individual set which is constructed of a number of frames or flats, covered with canvas or muslin.

A specific setting is designed according to the size, shape, and locality suggested by the author. The design (for construction) is broken up into a number of sections. Each section becomes a flat which is constructed to scale and designed to fit into a particular place in the set. To make for easy handling, these flats are generally not more than six feet in width. When the flats have been made and covered, they are set up on the stage in their proper order and place, and joined together. Then the entire set is painted. Sometimes a ceiling is added to give the setting naturalness and greater stability.

The individual set gives the designer opportunity for an unconventional arrangement of his stage, and for unusual angles and walls and openings; it can suggest a solidity and texture which the curtain sets cannot suggest; it can be painted to express the mood of the play or the specific locality of the scene; it can become a more real part of the play than the kinds of sets we have just described.

Such a set, of course, is more expensive, takes time to build, time to change, and requires more space for storage.

When we think of scenery, we generally think of the individual set; we would recommend, however, that the technical director in a school give greater consideration to the curtain and unit sets than is usually accorded them.

What Are the Materials of Construction?

Whatever type of scenery is decided upon, three points must always be taken into account: the scenery cannot be very heavy because it must be moved easily; it cannot be too bulky, for it must be stored somewhere; and it cannot be too expensive because the production budget is always low.

The frames are made of a light, soft wood which is easy to "work." The wood should also be straight-grained, well seasoned, and free from knots. The kind of lumber which best answers these requirements and is most readily procurable is white or northern

pine. White pine, one inch (undressed) in thickness, comes in eight, ten, twelve, fourteen, and sixteen-foot lengths. The dimensions of white pine lumber most used are:

1″ x 2″—used for cross and corner bracing; as a matter of fact, with sufficient bracing, an entire set, if it is not over twelve feet high, can be constructed of 1″ x 2″.

1″ x 3″—this is the width most frequently used for most of the frames.

1″ x 4″—for battens, door trims, and any place where greater strength than is given by the 1″ x 3″ is needed.

1″ x 6″—is useful for wide door trims, baseboards, stair risers, and the floors of platforms.

Next to white pine, the most useful material is a good or even medium grade of unbleached muslin. The muslin is used in covering the scenery frames. A linen canvas is better and more durable, but it is much more expensive, and the muslin serves all our purposes.

Plywood or profile board finds a number of uses in scenery construction. Plywood consists of three or more layers of veneer glued together. The form generally used is three-ply. It is employed in bracing the corners of the scenery pieces, in constructing curved surfaces, in low panels, in making cutouts and ground rows.

Composition board (compo board, pressed board, or beaver board), a composition material made of pressed pulp or fiber, and coming in sheets measuring four feet by eight, ten, and twelve feet, can be used in a variety of ways. It may be cut with a knife or sawed. Cutouts, ground rows, iron grillwork, door panels, and any number of trims and props can be made from composition board. With some bracing, it will stand free.

Other materials are used from time to time: among lumber material, we would mention moldings; among covering material, rayon and cotton flannel; among hardware, corrugated fasteners, screws, hinges, angle irons, and flat corner braces. But most of our scenery will be built from the materials described above.

Can I Afford a Set of Scenery?

Many teacher-directors, planning to produce a play, have absolutely no idea of what it will cost to purchase the building materials and paint for a set of scenery.

Let us take a hypothetical case of a stage with a proscenium opening of twenty-two feet, a depth of seventeen feet, and a height which will accommodate ten-foot flats. We wish to build an interior living room set. We study our stage dimensions and find that flats five feet and three feet in width will prove more usable than other widths. We decide, therefore, on seven flats, five feet in width, and four flats, three feet in width. We plan for four openings: a doorway seven by four and a half feet, two doors, seven by two and a half feet, and one window, five by four and a half feet.

We will use 1″ x 2″ and 1″ x 3″ white pine for our frames. Our 1″ x 2″ will cost us from two to three cents per lineal or running foot; our 1″ x 3″, two and a half to three and a half cents per running foot. By purchasing our lumber in ten-foot lengths and allowing five percent for waste, our lumber will cost us from $17 to $19.

A fair grade of muslin, thirty-six inches wide, will cost ten cents per yard; muslin, seventy-two inches wide, twenty cents per yard. We will use the thirty-six-inch width on our three-foot flats, and the seventy-two-inch width on our five-foot flats. Eliminating our seven-foot-high doorway which we will not cover, our muslin will come to $5.80.

Paint will cost us $2.50.

Hardware and lash lines will come to about $2.10. (We have not bought any lash-line eyes or lash cleats; we shall use long screws and nails instead.)

The total cost of our set, ready to be joined together and placed in position on the stage, is approximately $28.

(These figures are for Lawrence, Kansas, in November, 1942. Prices will naturally vary at different times and in different sections of the country.)

It is to be remembered that this set can be made over and re-painted for a fraction of the original cost.

How is Scenery Constructed?

The one construction problem common to nearly all theaters is the construction of flats. Because scenery is always viewed at some distance, and from one side only, any number of braces can be put in and any kind of construction can be used on the back without harm to the set. It is better, however, to build scenery according to rule and plan. And this should be remembered: a piece of scenery must be accurately squared and be built exactly to size, otherwise it will not fit the adjoining flat properly.

Making the Plain Flat

We begin by building a plain flat with no openings. The flat is to be twelve feet high and three feet wide. We select two pieces of 1″ x 3″, twelve feet long. We measure the length and make sure that it is exactly twelve feet.

From another piece of 1″ x 3″ we cut our top and bottom pieces and our brace to go across the center of the flat, or, our top, bottom, and toggle rails. We make sure that the length of these pieces, plus the widths of the two side pieces, will equal exactly three feet.

For perhaps no other reason except that the authors have constructed them that way, the stiles are cut to extend the full *length* of the flat; it is just as reasonable to cut the top and bottom rails to extend the full *width* of the flat with the stiles setting between them. There are slight advantages in both methods.

The two long lengths, or stiles, are placed on the floor (for the chances are that we have no bench large enough for flat building); they are spread apart and the top, bottom, and toggle rails are put in place between the stiles. The joint we are using is the butt, or right angle joint, which is the simplest to make and which can be well reinforced to give it sufficient strength.

At one corner, two pieces are placed together in position and

are squared carefully. Then corrugated iron fasteners are driven in to hold the two pieces together. The other three corners are joined in this manner, then the toggle rail is joined to the frame at its center.

The next step is the reinforcement of the frame. For this, four corner blocks and two keystones are cut from three-ply plywood.

TOP RAIL

CORNER BRACE (NOT NECESSARY FOR SMALL OR NARROW FLATS)

STILE

TOGGLE RAIL

KEYSTONE

CORRUGATED IRON FASTENERS

CORNER BLOCK

BOTTOM RAIL

PLAIN FLAT
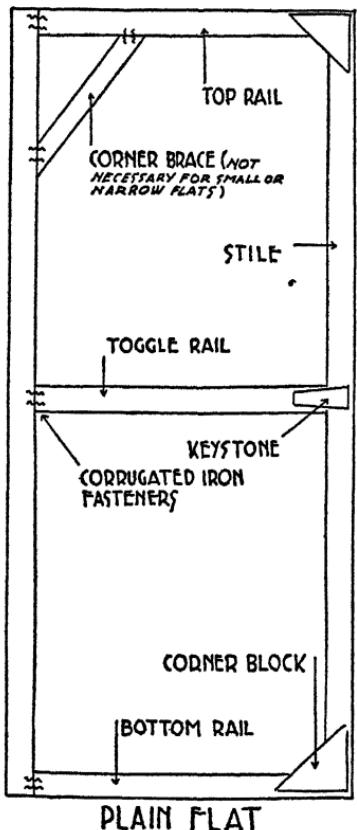
The corner blocks are in the shape of isosceles triangles whose legs are at least six inches in length; they are to be nailed to the four corners. A keystone is a piece of three-ply, rectangular in shape, and perhaps three inches wide and six to eight inches long; the keystone reinforces the joint at the toggle rail and stiles. The three-ply is nailed onto the frame with lath or shingle nails.

Since these nails will protrude through the front side of the flat, one of two things must be done: either the nails can be driven through, the flat frame turned over, and the nails clinched with a hammer; or a flat piece of iron can be placed under the corners and the nails clinched by this iron.

The corner blocks and keystones should be placed three-quarters of an inch *in* from the outer edge of the frame, so that, if the flat is required to be set at right angles to another flat, the two edges will rest flush to each other; if the blocks extend to the outer edge, their thickness will prevent the edges from resting flush, and will leave a crack between the flats the width of the three-ply.

The flat is now turned over with the face up. A strip of thirty-six-inch unbleached muslin, twelve feet long, is cut.

The muslin is laid over the frame and may be held in general position by four tacks, one at each corner, driven halfway in.

Now two courses of procedure are open: the muslin may be both glued and tacked, or it may simply be tacked. From experience in making over three hundred sets, we believe that gluing is not necessary; but both processes will be described.

If the muslin is to be tacked only, one long side is tacked, beginning at one corner, then the opposite side is tacked, then the two ends. The muslin is pulled close to the outer edge of the frame, and small, not large, tacks are driven in every three or four inches. The muslin is not stretched too tight, for, if it is, it will either tear or will warp the frame when the paint shrinks the cloth.

If the muslin is to be glued, it is first tacked on, the tacks being placed near the *inner* edge of the frame and about six inches apart. A glue mixture, composed of water and flake or powdered glue, is dissolved by boiling; some whiting is stirred into the glue; then the flaps of muslin outside the rows of tacks are glued to the frame while the glue is still hot. The glue is applied to the frame with a brush, the muslin is stretched smoothly and patted down, and the flat is set aside to dry.

The flat is now complete except for lash lines, lash cleats, and brace cleat. The lash line, a piece of sash cord or clothesline not longer than the flat, is attached to the back of the flat, at the top,

LASH CLEAT

LASH LINES

BRACE CLEAT FOR HOOKING IN STAGE BRACE

METHOD OF LASHING FLATS
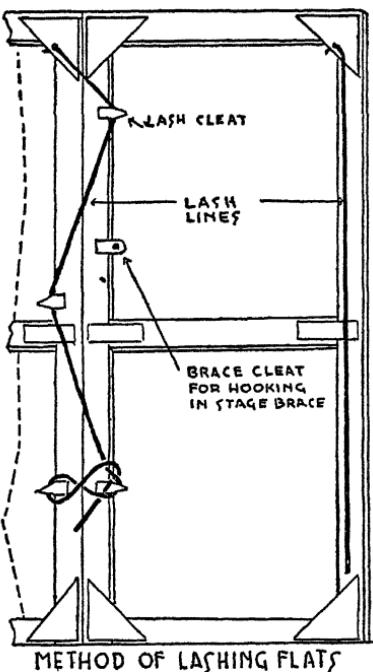
either with a lash-line eye or through a hole in the corner block, or with lash nails near the inner edge of the stile. Two lash cleats are sufficient for a twelve-foot flat. The brace cleat is screwed into
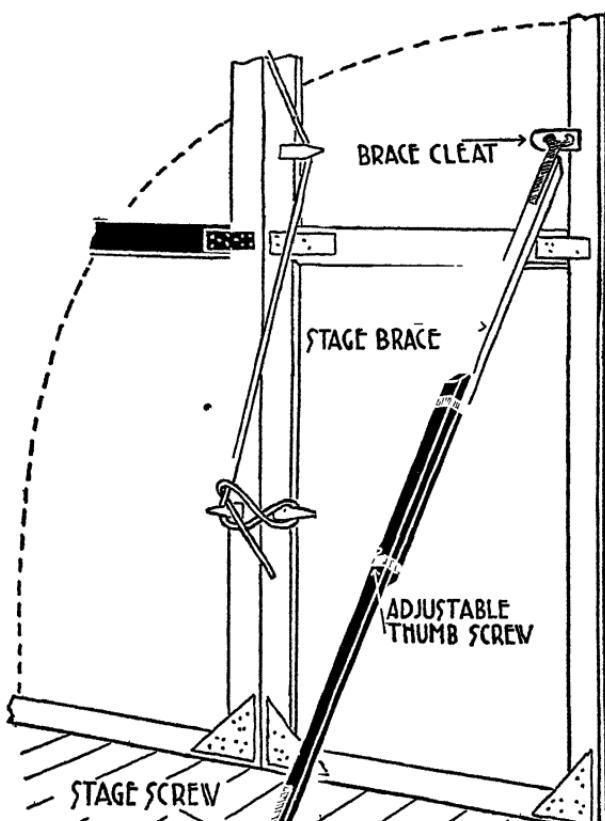
METHOD OF BRACING FLATS

the flat side of one of the stiles, about six feet from the floor, the opening for the stage brace extending inward.

When flats are completed, it is suggested that two or more chair gliders (which can be bought at any ten cent store) be fastened to the bottom edge of each flat. The flat can then be moved over the floor easily without danger of splintering the wood.

MAKING THE DOOR FLAT

It is advisable to make the door flat and the door as two separate units, so that when the door is slammed it will not shake the scenery. This, however, is not always possible, and we shall first describe the construction of the one-piece door flat.

The frame is made as for a plain flat. Then, in place of the toggle rail, a cross brace is put in at the height of the door; and two lengths of 1″ x 3″ are joined to the frame at the width of the door. These three lengths form the frame around the door. The standard height for doors is seven feet, the width, two and a half feet; but these dimensions, of course, vary. The bottom rail below the door is then sawed off, and a strip of strap iron is screwed into the bottom edge of the flat, in order that there shall be no 1″ x 3″ projection below the door to trip over.

DOOR·FLAT

A door frame (it can be made of 1″ x 2″ or 1″ x 3″) is constructed inside the door opening, and is hinged to the flat frame so that the door will swing downstage and outward. Then the flat is turned over on its back, the whole covered with muslin, and the muslin cut around the edge of the door with a sharp knife.

When the frame and the door are two separate units, the frame
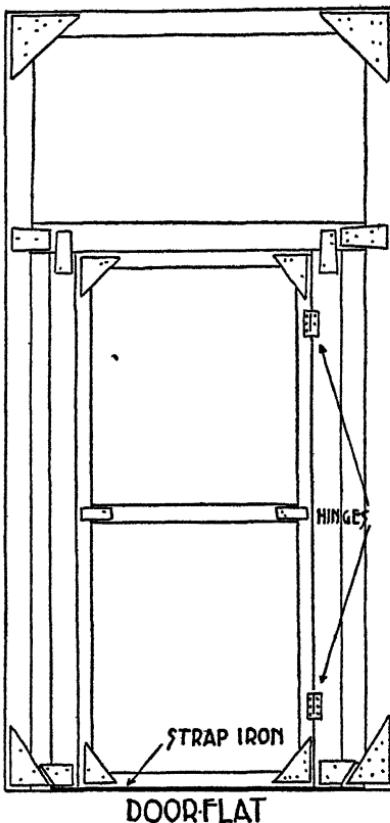
is constructed and the opening is cut as before, except that in this case the opening is a half inch larger than the door casing is to be.

The casing for the door is constructed the same as an ordinary door casing, including the thickness and one trim (the one which will lie parallel to the instage wall of the flat). It should have a low sill at the bottom and should be reinforced with angle irons at the four corners.

The casing and door are made and covered. Composition board is better for covering such a door than muslin. The door is set back in the casing and is hinged at the off stage edge of the casing to swing downstage and outward. The casing with its door is set in the frame opening and is braced to the floor in the same manner as the flat.

The Window Flat

Except in the unit set (in which two or more different styles of window may be constructed to fit into the opening), it is not necessary to make the window casing and the flat in two separate pieces. A casing similar to a door casing is constructed and nailed firmly to the flat frame. If the window is to be practicable, it may be hinged, or it may be raised by sliding the window sash in two grooves.

Glass is not used in windows because it catches light from the footlights and border lights and reflects it in the eyes of the audience; also, it is easily broken. Wire screening over a window looks like wire screening and tarlatan looks like tarlatan. The best substitute for glass in windows is nothing at all.

There are many varieties of window; the stage carpenter should have no difficulty in finding an actual window which meets his specifications, and, if he is at all ingenious, he will be able to reproduce this window in simplified form in his set.

The Archway

The simplest and easiest way for a beginner to build a curved archway is as follows:

A flat frame is made containing a rectangular opening which

represents the width and extreme height of the arch. The frame is placed face downward on the floor. With a string, tack, and a piece of chalk, the desired curve is drawn on the floor, extending from one side of the opening to the top and down to the other side. Small lengths of 1″ x 3″ are cut, and, with one end just touching the chalk line, are nailed onto the frame of the opening about eight or ten inches apart. Extra pieces of 1″ x 3″ are nailed beneath these lengths, these second pieces being flush with the face of the flat.

Next, strips of composition board, eight or ten inches wide, are cut. These will represent the thickness of the arch. They are nailed to the edges of the small lengths and to the edges of the stiles, following the curve. The composition board may be reinforced and prevented from bending by diagonal braces running from the board to the frame.

The flat is now turned over on its back (or stood upright) and covered with muslin. The muslin is brought over the edge of the composition board and onto its curved surface where it may be glued or painted to hold it in place.

THE FIREPLACE

There are many varieties of fireplace, and it would be an endless task to attempt to describe the construction of the various kinds. Most fireplaces of the formal variety are made of a frame-

work of 1" x 3" (or 1" x 2") covered with muslin or composition board (the board is better). The fireplace may be constructed as a separate unit, or be a part of a fireplace flat; the backing for the opening may be built into the fireplace, or it may be a three-fold screen which sets back of the opening.
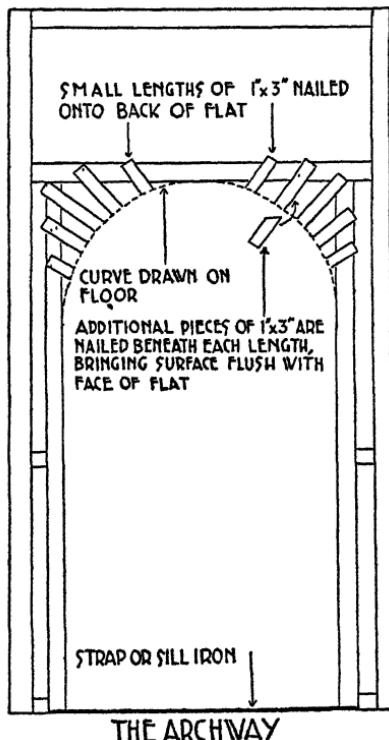
A fireplace is made interesting by its shape and its trim. The opening may be square, rectangular, or curved at the top; molding around the mantelpiece and along the sides is effective; an ornament made of composition board or rope may be sewed to the muslin or tacked to the composition board of the fireplace.

A rough stone fireplace is more difficult to construct. The frame is made as before; then it is covered with chicken wire; next, bunches of wadded paper are sewed to the wire with strong thread; then wrinkled muslin is sewed to the wire and paper, and painted.

THE CEILING

If there is no fly loft, a ceiling becomes a cumbersome and superfluous piece of scenery. If there is a fly loft, a ceiling is sometimes used since it adds completeness to the set.

Two kinds of ceiling are in use. In one, two long battens, the width of the stage opening, are placed on the floor, one upstage, the other downstage. Several strips of muslin which have been sewed together are tacked to these upstage and downstage battens. The length of these strips will be the depth of the ceiling; the length of the battens, the width of the ceiling.

Several more battens called "stretchers" are cut to fit up and down stage of the ceiling between the battens. They must fit snug, otherwise the ceiling will sag. The stretchers are bolted to the long battens by means of a ceiling plate or in some other practical way. The muslin at the sides may be tacked lightly to the two side stretchers.

The ceiling is attached to two sets of lines, downstage and upstage, and is raised towards the loft, parallel to the stage, the set is put in place, and the ceiling is lowered until it rests on the top of the set.

When not in use, the stretchers are removed and the ceiling is rolled up on one of the battens.

The framed ceiling is a solid frame, built like a flat except that stronger lumber than 1″ x 3″ is used. It may or may not be constructed in two sections and hinged. It is lowered to the floor, two sets of lines are attached, and it is raised and lowered into place as is the roll ceiling. When not in use, one set of lines is removed and it is drawn up into the flies like a drop.

USUAL AMATEUR STEPS WITH RISERS TOO HIGH, TREADS TOO NARROW

RISER

TREAD

STEPS

Steps offer no special problem in building. Only one suggestion for their construction will be offered. On many amateur stages the risers are too high and the treads too narrow. (The risers are the vertical boards, the treads the horizontal ones.) Risers should not be higher than seven inches, and treads should be ten inches in depth.

BETTER STEPS WITH WIDER TREADS AND LOWER RISERS

STEP CONSTRUCTION

THE DROP

For a drop, several strips of muslin are sewed together. A plain seam is always used for stitching the muslin, never a flat or a lap seam. The strips, when hung, will run horizontally and not up and down. Three-inch or four-inch battens are attached to the top and bottom. A set of lines is attached to the top and the drop is swung into place. A drop may be framed if desired. Framing prevents wrinkling and sagging.
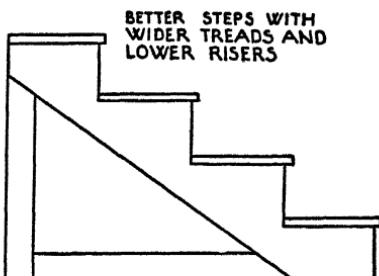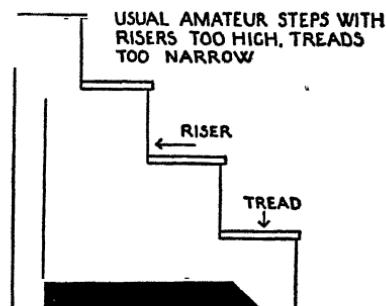
SET OF LINES ATTACHED TO TOP BATTEN
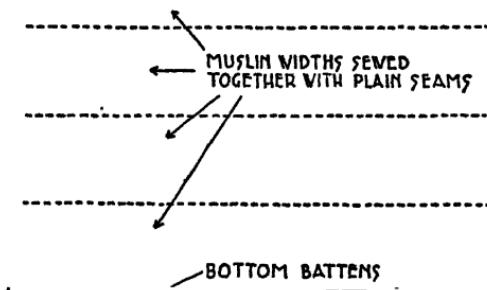
SECTION OF DROP CLOTH
TACKED TO FIRST BATTEN

MUSLIN WIDTHS SEWED
TOGETHER WITH PLAIN SEAMS

SECOND BATTEN
NAILED TO FIRST
BATTEN, WITH
CLOTH BETWEEN

HOLE BORED THROUGH
BOTH BATTENS FOR
ONE OF THE LINES

BOTTOM BATTENS
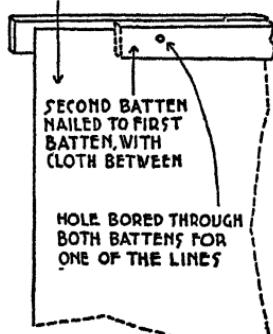
THE DROP

THE GROUND ROW

A ground row which represents a wall, foliage, mountains, or something else in the middle or far distance is constructed of a frame built like a flat, with the profile or outline cut from three-ply plywood or composition board. The composition board is at-

COMPOSITION
BOARD OR
THREE-PLY

HINGED
JACK-OPENED

1"x3" OR 1"x2" FRAME

JACK

REAR   GROUND ROW   *SIDE*
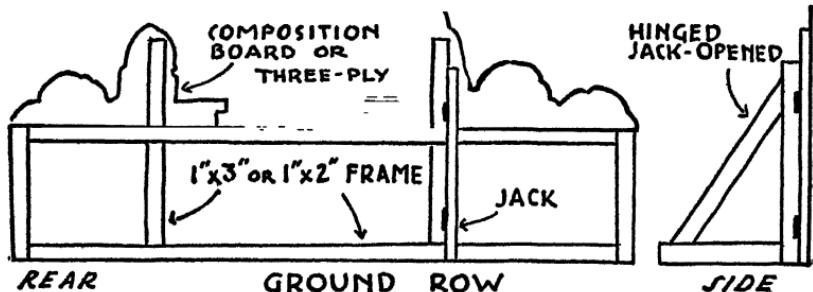
tached to the frame and is braced sufficiently so that it will not warp or bend. The face of the frame and board is covered with muslin. A ground row is often supported in an upright position by means of a jack, or it may be supported by a short stage brace.

TREES

A two-dimensional tree is made of the same materials and in the same way as a ground row, the frame forming the trunk, the

three-ply or composition board being cut to form the foliage and branches.

In a three-dimensional tree, four uprights of 1″ x 2″ and several pairs of cross braces of 1″ x 2″ are used. The length of the

FIRST STAGE FRAME →

SECOND: CHICKEN WIRE →

COMPOSITION OR PROFILE BOARD

THIRD: MUSLIN SEWED TO WIRE →

FRAME ←

← TWO-DIMENSIONAL TREE: REAR

THREE-DIMENSIONAL TREE TRUNK: FRONT →

TREE CONSTRUCTION
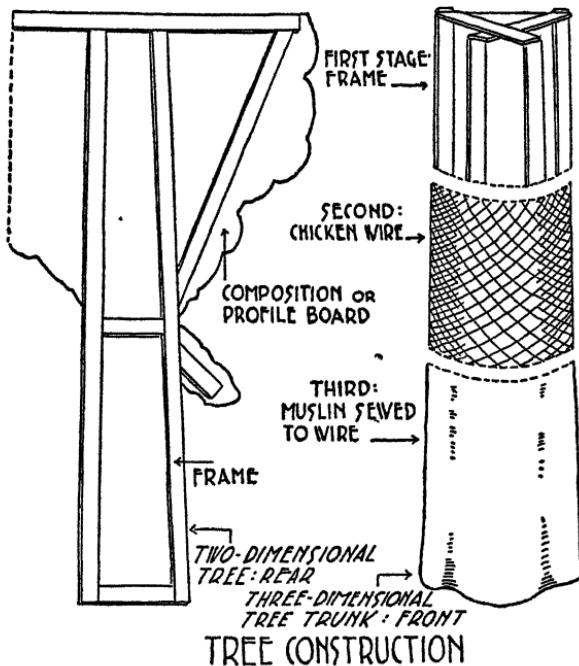
cross braces determines the diameter of the tree; these lengths decrease in size or they go upward.

When the cross braces are attached to the uprights and the frame is complete, it is covered with chicken wire which is not pulled tight, but is left to form an irregular, rounded shape. Then the wire is covered with muslin which is sewed to the wire with stout thread. The muslin may be sewed flat, or it may be left in uneven folds to suggest the bark of the tree.

23

SCENERY: PAINTING

THIS chapter will explain the painting of simple scenery and give enough information to insure for the beginning scene painter a start on his career.

Materials and Equipment

Oil paint is not used in the painting of scenery because it is expensive, is difficult to apply, and leaves a shine on the cloth. Scenery is almost invariably painted with water paint, though there is a sharp difference of opinion on what kind of water paint should be used.

Kalsomine is a cold water paint which comes in packages ready for application upon the addition of cold water. Dry or scenic color is a powder which is mixed with glue and water. A recent book declares that only amateurs paint with kalsomine, that scenic artists never do. This statement implies that scenic color paint is greatly superior to kalsomine, which is not true.

We must grant that better colors can be obtained through the use of scenic color, and it is not expensive; but it takes longer to prepare and is more difficult to mix. Good effects can be obtained from kalsomine; it does not rub off, and can be painted over many times; it is recommended for beginners.

Kalsomine, under various trade names, comes in many colors nearly all of which (black is the exception) are satisfactory for scenic work. It is usually put up in one-pound and five-pound packages, costing from five cents to fifty cents a pound (depending

on the color), and can be purchased at, or ordered through, any paint store.

Scenic color comes in approximately sixty colors. Very few paint stores carry it. Usually it is ordered direct from the manufacturer.

Before using scenic color, a sizing water is prepared. To do this, flake or ground glue is soaked overnight in a small quantity of water,—just enough to cover it. Then the water-glue solution is heated until the glue is dissolved. Next, warm water is added to this until, when the hand is dipped into the solution, the fingers stick slightly—but only slightly—when touched together. If there is no adhesion, the solution is too weak; if there is strong adhesion, it is too thick and more water should be added.

While the glue size is still warm, the scenic color, which has been mixed with water, is added to it and stirred well. The paint is now ready for application.

Whether scenic color or kalsomine is used, whiting will be one of our materials. Whiting is a gray-white pigment, used for priming and for mixing with other colors. It is cheap, costing four or five cents a pound. As with scenic color, whiting should be mixed with sizing water before it is used.

Three or four different-sized brushes are needed, a six-inch or eight-inch brush for laying-in, a four-inch wall brush, a two-inch brush for detail work, and a small liner.

An assortment of paint buckets are needed—large and small. No matter how many we have, there are never enough. A carpenter's chalk line, and a piece of batten several feet long and with a perfectly straight edge for lining, will be useful.

We can get along very well with these materials, but a portable platform, called a boomerang, is a very useful accessory. If we are going to use twelve-foot scenery, our boomerang is a platform, two feet by eight feet, and six feet high. A ladder is built at each end. The structure is put on casters or gliders. With the boomerang we are able to paint our flats easily and quickly without so much moving of ladders. Money and time spent on a boomerang are never regretted.

A good eight-foot or ten-foot stepladder completes our equipment.

The Procedure in Painting

The first step in painting is the priming of the flats. Priming is the first coat given the unpainted muslin. It shrinks the cloth, makes it taut, and prepares the surface for later coats. It is usually painted with a thick mixture of whiting which is applied with a lay-on brush. It is not essential, however, that whiting be used; any leftover colors which are not too dark are suitable for priming. When a flat which has been used is to be repainted, priming is not necessary.

The flats are primed individually; when the second—sometimes called the ground coat—is applied the flats may be set up, a wall at a time, or, if space permits, the entire set may be placed in position and painted as a unit. There should be some test-mixing before this ground coat is applied. The colors should be mixed before the water is added. Water makes the color thirty to forty percent darker than it will appear on the flat when dry; and the dry powder, rubbed on the hand, will never give quite the tone it will have when on the wall. A small portion should be mixed, water added, and a few square feet painted and allowed to dry.

One point may be mentioned here about the tone chosen for the ground color. A square foot of the color may not look too bright; but how about five or six hundred square feet? The painter must remember that the larger the area the more gray his color must be; if it is too strong, it will walk right out in front of the actors, and the audience will hardly be able to see their faces. Enough paint should be prepared to go over the entire set. It is very difficult to match a tone exactly.

The paint is applied with the large brush. The surface should be painted swiftly and lightly, and with brush strokes not all in one direction as in oil painting. If the brush pulls, the paint is too thick and more water can be added; if the paint goes on unevenly,

the painter has not kept his paint stirred properly—he must keep stirring frequently, otherwise the pigment will settle in the bottom of the bucket; if the paint runs or streaks, it is too thin and more pigment can be added; if the ground coat is lighter than the primer, and the prime is coming through, he has been pressing down too hard. He cannot do anything about this spot now; he must wait until it dries before repainting it.

If, when the ground coat is finished and has dried, the painter looks at it and finds that it is dead and powdery (the way too many school sets look) something has to be done to give the walls more life or depth or texture. So now he spatters or stipples or sponges the walls. This, the third step in the procedure, will be explained in a moment.

As a fourth step he trims the set, painting in the cornices, door and window trims, and baseboards, and putting in his high-lights and shadows. Suggestions for trimming will also be made later.

The set is now painted and his last step is to wash out his paint buckets and clean his paint brushes. Especially do we recommend proper care for the brushes. They are expensive; they should be washed thoroughly and not left in the paint buckets, otherwise they will begin to spread and spatter color and will soon be useless.

The Third Step: The Finishing Wall Coat

Returning to a consideration of the flat or ground coat—after it has been applied, painting becomes more a matter of individual method. Each painter has his special way of giving texture, depth, or life to his walls. It is well to remember that a good job of scene painting requires practice; and, that before any of the processes which we suggest presents a satisfactory result, the amateur painter must have had experience in its application.

SPATTERING

Let us say that the painter has used a dull yellow for his ground coat which, upon completion, appears flat and uninteresting. He now divides his yellow paint and puts it into two buckets. In one

bucket he mixes some whiting with the yellow, in the other some orange.

He takes the bucket of lighter yellow, dips his big brush into it, and squeezes much of the color out. He stands several feet in front of the scenery, holding the brush upright in his right hand. He places his left hand in front of the right and snaps the wooden portion of the brush sharply against it, splattering the flat with light-yellow dots. He continues this process over the entire wall. Then he dips his brush in the orange yellow and again goes over the wall. By this time his left hand is sore and his right hand is tired, but the wall has lost its flat, hard look; the three colors, indistinguishable from the audience, have made it more interesting.

RAGGING OR ROLLING

The same dull-yellow ground coat may be brightened and given an uneven texture by applying first the light yellow and then the orange yellow to the wall with a piece of burlap or other heavy cloth. The burlap is dipped in one of the colors, partly squeezed out, rolled up unevenly, and then rolled over the surface of the wall. When the wall has been gone over, the roll is dipped in the other color and the process repeated.

SPONGING

A large sponge is dipped into the bucket and squeezed out. The ground coat is patted with the sponge, first with light yellow then with orange yellow. In patting, the pressure is varied; here and there a smear is made; gaps must not be left or the wall will look too spotty. When the process is finished, the wall has a rough texture, resembling stucco.

STIPPLING

The brush is dipped into the paint and shaken out. Then it is pushed at the scenery, the ends of the bristles touching the walls. This is repeated until the painter is very bored and tired, but again the dead wall has taken on an interesting texture.

BLENDING

Two brushes are used. One is dipped in the light yellow and a small section of wall is painted; the other is then dipped in the orange yellow and a small section near the first section is painted. The sections are irregular in shape and size. Occasionally one color is carried over into the other. All the color is worked out of each brush as the two sections are blended together. Then both sections are worked over lightly with a dry brush. The entire wall is gone over in this manner. When complete, the wall is no longer an expanse of sameness.

GLAZING

Much water is added to the orange yellow until it is a thin wash. Then the dull-yellow wall is rapidly painted over. The hard yellow has now been softened and the tone changed.

The Fourth Step: Trimming the Set

Rooms are trimmed with panels, casings, moldings, baseboards, and other woodwork. Often, when but one set is required for the play, the woodwork is real and is built into the set. Then it can be painted or stained in the same way as actual woodwork; the trimming will possess natural high-lights and will cast natural shadows. But, for many good reasons, woodwork often has to be faked, and is painted on the muslin.

With the help of the straight-edged batten, or the carpenter's chalk line, which becomes a snap line, the lines for the woodwork are drawn in chalk, charcoal, or soft pencil on the completed walls. Beginners have a habit of making their trims too narrow: they often make the door trims three or four inches wide, the baseboards, six inches high. This gives the room a tenement look. The door and window trims should be five or six inches in width, the baseboards, eight to ten inches high.

Generally, the trim is painted to represent painted woodwork rather than the natural wood; in which case, if the walls of our

set are green, we might, for example, paint our woodwork a light cream.

GRAINING

If, however, we wish to suggest a natural rather than a painted wood, it will be necessary for us to simulate the grain of the wood. To do this the woodwork is first painted a medium brown. Two buckets of paint are mixed: one a reddish brown, the other a buff. A two-inch or four-inch stiff-bristled brush is dipped into the first bucket, not deep; and most of the paint is removed from the brush. Then, with the tips of the bristles touching the surface, the brush is drawn along the trim, making a number of uneven lines. First the red is used, then the buff. The direction of the strokes must match the direction the grain would naturally take.

HIGH-LIGHT AND SHADOW LINES

The next step is lining for high-lights and shadows. The location of these is dependent upon the presumed source of light; their size and form are dependent upon the size and design of the moldings and trims.

If the painter is in doubt about a room trim, the chances are that all he needs to do is look up from this book and examine the room in which he is sitting. This examination will tell him about door and window trims and baseboards; it will show him what he needs to know about light sources and the position of high-lights and shadows. Unless he observes closely, it will not tell him about the color of shadows which many people think are always gray black or gray. If the painter is in doubt about shadow color, let him take this book and hold it between the light source and the wall so that its shadow falls clearly on the wall. Then let him examine closely the color in the shadow. This should tend to remind him that, if he is in doubt about a shadow color when painting scenery, he can hold some object between the light and the wall flat and thus discover his shadow color.

In scene painting, we have to choose a light source. If the set is

for a particular play with an explicit light source, the location of the shadows will be determined by this fact; but ordinarily we have to decide arbitrarily as to whether our light shall come from left or right stage. We generally can assume that the light comes from just above eye level.

Two suggestions are offered for shadowing: first, shadows are usually painted too narrow; be generous with them. Second, paint them with a thin rather than a thick paint; a thin paint will allow a little of the unshadowed wall color to come through and the shadows will appear more natural.

The paneling of doors or walls is a question, first, of determining your high-light and shadow colors; second, the contours of the moldings; third, the source of light, and where, on these moldings, high-light and shadow should fall. Perhaps the best policy for a beginner is to copy a picture or an actual panel.

Exterior Painting

It is easier to paint interiors than exteriors. In an outdoor scene we have to solve such problems as perspective, three dimensions, a distant landscape, foliage, and trees. We can set down here only a few suggestions for meeting the simple and common problems of exterior painting.

THE SKY DROP

Two things are wrong with many of our school theater sky drops: they are too blue in color and are too flat and dead. The sky should be gray white rather than deep blue; at least it should contain no more than a tone of blue. If a deeper blue is needed, the blue color should be added through lighting.

For painting a sky drop, mix a two-gallon bucket of whiting. If scenic color is used, add about one-quarter of a pound of ultramarine blue; if kalsomine is used, add a little less than a pound of ultramarine. This will give sufficient blue tone to the sky. The flatness can be eliminated by spattering the drop, very carefully

and evenly, first with blue several shades deeper than the general tone, and then with pale pink. This represents a great deal of careful work, but it results in a more interesting sky.

STONEWORK

For dark stonework, four dull tones of color are used—gray, green, blue, and brown. The green, blue, and brown are grayed. The colors are applied in areas varying in size and shape, and are blended together while the paint is still wet. They should be blended carefully in some places, not so carefully in others. The mortar lines are painted, not with white but with gray. They may be wide or narrow and should vary in width here and there. Shadow lines of dull purple are painted under the stones and along one side; every stone does not need to be shadowed, and no two stones should be shadowed exactly alike. When the wall is dry, it is spattered with a brownish purple. This will age and soften it, and will take away the hard effect of the mortar lines and the detail of the shadow lines.

For light stonework, colors such as light gray, light green or blue are blended on the walls; the mortar lines may be gray white or buff white; and the spattering of light brown or blue.

BRICKWORK

The best results for brickwork are obtained by reversing the order of painting for stonework. That is, the wall is blended with white, buff, and gray and allowed to dry; then, with the lining batten or snap line, horizontal lines, which shall be guiding lines for the rows of bricks, are drawn on the wall. The color for the bricks is mixed. Be careful of the color: do not paint the bricks a heavy brick red. If they are to be one solid color, the red should be grayed. A more interesting wall is made by having several buckets containing shades of red, dull pink, yellow, dull brown, and blue. The brown and blue are used for small groups of contrasting bricks here and there in the wall.

Each brick is painted separately with two or four strokes of a

two-inch brush, nearly dry. The bricks may be painted a little larger than actual bricks; if the actual bricks are eight by three inches, the painted bricks may be nine or ten by three and one-half inches. The painter need not be accurate with all the lines and corners; mathematical accuracy is not interesting and, besides, there are irregularities in the best brick wall.

A few dull-purple shadows are added here and there, again not too regularly but showing an occasional imperfection.

If, when the wall is finished, it looks a little too thin or light, it should be spattered with deeper tones of the brick colors; if it is dark and heavy, it should be spattered with lighter shades of the colors.

EXTERIOR WOODWORK

Next to painting foliage, an exterior wall made of unpainted, weather-beaten boards is as difficult as anything the beginning painter can attempt. Let us say that the piece to be painted is the wall of a shed, constructed of upright boards.

First, though this is not essential, a number of strips of composition board may be cut to the length and width of the boards, and nailed over the flat to the frame. The wall is given a ground coat. Next, the boards are dry brushed, individually, using brown and dark gray. The boards should be given variety in tone; for example, two boards may be toned dark, the third light, the fourth medium, and so on. Here and there the grain may be represented by blue gray and buff. If the boards are simulated with composition board, there will be natural high-lights and shadows between them (though these may have to be emphasized with paint). If the entire wall is painted, shadows and high-lights are painted on. One shadow line is painted wide and dark in dull blue brown or dull purple; another is narrow and light. Here and there a high-light appears where a board has warped and catches the light. In painting, our light sources must always be remembered.

The painting of such exterior woodwork requires practice and patience, and the beginner should not be discouraged if his first attempt is not completely realistic.

TREES AND FOLIAGE

What helpful advice can be given about the painting of foliage? First, unless the painter is experienced, he should avoid painting it whenever possible, for badly painted foliage is worse than no foliage at all. Sometimes the foliage can be dispensed with. For instance, we can sometimes do without tree foliage downstage (where detail in painting would be necessary) by having only the tree trunks and several lower, leafless branches visible to the audience. Second, when foliage is necessary, the painter can avoid too great detail; let him outline the foliage, paint in the mass, and allow the audience to imagine the individual leaves.

In painting tree foliage, it is better to begin by painting the shadows and work to the high-lights. First, the blue-purple or dark gray-green shadow sections are laid on. Above these, masses of overhanging branches are painted in dull green. These in turn are high-lighted with smaller areas of yellow green or gray green.

One way to simulate the foliage of trees is to take a feather duster (if such is still to be found), partly fill it with paint, shake it out, and stroke an area above the shadow in the direction in which the leaves would naturally hang.

If leaves seem necessary, do not paint an entire area with bright-green spots. Group a number of leaves together as a unit, and not too large a unit, and put them on with single strokes of the brush, using gray-green, not bright-green, paint. Let most of them join and a few stand alone above the shadow mass; leave some areas in deep shadow; and once again work in blocks.

Remember that colors in nature decrease in intensity and strength with distance. In painting mountains or ground rows for the far distance, lighter shades such as grays, pale blues, and violets should be used. Even trees in the distance are light in tone and gray in color.

Finally, we reiterate, while painting an interior set may be accomplished by the inexpert painter, painting an exterior requires skill and knowledge. The painter must be willing to spend time and study in learning to paint.

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SCENERY: THE DESIGN

THE DESIGNER of scenery is not a free agent; he must meet demands from several quarters before he can set down his concrete design for the stage. And, like so much of the work to be done in the theater, scenery design cannot be accomplished without training and practice.

For instance, in the field of design, the set, as we have been thinking of it, is only one unit of our scenery. Design must include all that will be seen: lighting, furnishings, costumes, even the movements and groupings of the actors.

Scenery is the total "environment" (to use Robert Edmond Jones' much-quoted word) for the action. By design, then, we shall mean the arrangement of the different visible elements which make up the environment.

To amplify our assertion that the designer of scenery is not a free agent, we would call to mind that this arrangement of openings and wall spaces, of furniture and lines and colors, has to satisfy four demands: an aesthetic demand that it meet the rules of good composition; two pictorial demands, one from the actor's standpoint, the other from the standpoint of the audience; and a moral demand or obligation imposed by the play itself.

(There is, of course, a fifth demand: the financial demand made by our budget; but we beg permission to forget the money problem in our discussion of design. Anyway, it generally costs no more to carry out a good design than a bad one.)

Good Composition

The designer thinks of the stage requirement for playing the play: the openings, the stairways, the set props, the natural sources of light; and he knows that, as he arranges these elements in his scenery, the resulting design should have good composition; that is, it should have unity, balance, emphasis, and harmony.

In considering unity, he recognizes that the elements he selects should be congenial in their relation to each other. He must not select light pastel shades for his costumes and place them against a set painted in strong, raw colors; he should not devise walls which are to be partly painted and partly draped or curtained; he should not place big, overstuffed pieces of furniture in a small room. These elements he selects should, when they are all together, express a oneness.

In considering balance, he thinks of weight. He does not want a large doorway at left, a window at left rear, a table center, and nothing more than an insignificant door and two light chairs at right. If he arranges his stage in this manner, the left side will seem to be heavier than the right, and will give the impression of lifting it into the air.

He considers emphasis and, as he does, he should think of the action of the play. It is easy to emphasize a certain area in the set by a stairway, a brilliant spot of color, a large opening, or by strong lighting; he knows that emphasis, just for its own sake or even for the sake of making a striking picture, is wrong; he might destroy a point of emphasis for the action if he gave his composition pictorial emphasis without thinking what is to go in this picture. (Here his composition is subservient to the demands of the play and actors.)

Lastly, he thinks of harmony, of fitness. A tall, arched doorway in a small room; a wide border in a low room; beautiful, polished furniture in a badly constructed and badly painted set; elaborate lighting tricks with the lights constantly changing and dimming in a simple little realistic play—all of these would be inharmonious and unpleasant in their effect upon an audience.

So, as he sets out to design his scenery he thinks of the rules of composition, especially of unity, balance, emphasis, and harmony.

The Audience

The designer cannot, however, begin designing when he has considered only the rules of composition.

The audience wants to see what is on the stage, and it wants to see everything, therefore, he cannot place some element of his design where it cannot be seen by the audience; he cannot, for instance, place a heavy piece of furniture where it blocks an important entrance, or construct a stairway which leads to a door, upstage center, so high that the door cannot be seen from the balcony.

Especially does the audience want to see the actors: they will be the focal point for the eyes of the audience; and, very important, these actors will be on the stage floor at the lowest level of the stage picture. This circumstance places restrictions on the designer's plan. He cannot make points of emphasis or interest high up on the walls; he must keep the upper regions of the scenery darker, more indistinct than the lower part. Control of the lights may aid in keeping the eyes of the audience down, but he must control his lines and color as well.

Lastly, this arrangement he is making will be some distance removed from the eyes of the audience. The nearest members of the audience will be perhaps twenty-five feet from most of the scenery, the majority of the audience will be more than forty feet away from it; some of the spectators will be as far as one hundred and twenty feet. So, his design must be simple and without great detail; it must have carrying power in line and color; and it must be slightly enlarged or exaggerated in order that it shall appear natural at a distance.

The Actors

Still the designer is not a free agent when he has given consideration to the demands of composition and of the audience;

there are the actors. The demands of the actors are three in number: actors must be visible, they must be as comfortable as possible in the set, and they must have room for their action.

The designer should not dispose of his elements in such a way that his actors will have to act behind them; he should not arrange his lighting so that in an important scene the actors will be all but invisible to the audience, and will have to rely solely on audible acting; and he should not choose colors for his walls or upholstery which are so vivid that the audience is compelled to make an effort to look past them to find the actors.

Likewise, the design of the scenery should not be such that the actors are uncomfortable in it. A stairway should not have such high risers and narrow treads that they make the actor fear he will break his neck when ascending them; a doorway should not be so narrow (even though a narrow door is interesting in the pictorial composition) that an actor cannot make a comfortable entrance with the two suitcases he has to carry; a divan should not be so low that the actor's knees are on a level with his chin when he sits in it.

Lastly, the actor should have room to move around in the set. Occasionally a designer arranges a set which is pleasing, is in keeping with the play, and is right in every detail except that the actor has to squeeze around tables sideways, and make an angry rush at his opponent in about three feet of rushing space. The designer should provide space for acting.

The Play

Some creative imaginations work in this fashion: they get an idea; then, using this idea merely as a point for departure, they work away from it until the finished creation bears but little resemblance to the original idea. Some designers read a play hastily; they quickly visualize a setting for the play; then they toss aside the playbook and let their imaginations go; and the set they design, while it may be excellent, has but little in common with the mood and idea of the play.

The final demand—indeed, we might say the primary demand

—made on the designer is made by the play itself. Above all else, the design should speak of the play and for the play.

There are warm colors and cold colors—and there are warm plays and cold ones; there are colors which suggest sorrow or gaiety—and plays of the same nature; there are pleasant combinations of colors and unpleasant combinations—and there are plays written to provoke pleasant responses, others to provoke unpleasant ones. The conscientious designer thinks of the play and of what color or colors will best express the mood of that play.

So there are lines in scenery which affect an audience differently and definitely. The straight, upright line suggests hope and aspiration; the horizontal line lassitude and slow pace; the diagonal line, uncertainty and bewilderment; the curved line, comfort and stability; the crooked line, instability and disorder. Certain plays call for the expression of certain of these qualities. The designer must use lines in his walls, openings, and furniture. He asks: what kind of lines does the play call for? He arranges the direction of his lines, when possible, in keeping with the mood of the play.

And he has his lights. There are qualities and intensities of light which are gay, or mysterious, or glaring, or mildly pleasant. Instead of having the lights clash with the meaning and mood of the play, the designer makes them an integral part of the play, a unit in his general design.

Looking at design and the play from another angle, there are, as we have explained earlier, farces and comedies, melodramas and tragedies. A farce is an exaggeration; therefore, if the designer is designing for a farce, should not his scenery possess an exaggeration proportionate to the exaggeration in the play?—a wall which is a little too gay and ridiculous for reality, a vase of flowers which is a little too outlandish to be taken seriously, a curtain draped in a fashion which is a little too bizarre for reasonable people?

So there are plays of realism and romanticism. A realistic play calls for a setting in which the construction and arrangement of the elements suggest the realistic; a romantic play calls for something a little more dreamlike, something either a little nearer to or farther from the heart's desire.

The Designer in the School Theater

Four demands, therefore, are made of the designer: demands of the play, audience, actors, and of composition. These demands can be understood by any intelligent theater worker; but not every theater worker has the talent or training for creating the basic . design for scenery.

The director may say to a clever student, "You will stage-manage the next play," and expect the chosen student to do an acceptable job of his assignment; he cannot say to another student, "You will design the scenery for the next play," and expect this student to create an adequate design. Designing, like acting, is the result of initial gift, a study of principles, training, and an active, creative imagination.

Back of successful stage designing is training in general design principles. The school theater has not grown to the position where a scene designer is always numbered among its personnel. It can put a designer to work on its special problems; it usually cannot offer basic training to that designer.

A teacher-director may, therefore, do one of several things: realizing his own inadequacy and the inadequacy of his fellow workers, he may use simple, unobtrusive backgrounds, which, though not contributing to the interpretation of his plays, will not stand in the way of their interpretation; or he may study design himself and eventually be able to create his visual stage design as he creates the other parts of his acted play; or he may discover an art teacher or an advanced student in architecture or painting, arouse his interest in the theater, and persuade him to apply his knowledge of design to specific stage conditions and demands.

The Stage Plans

Whether the design is simple or complex, whether the scenery endeavors to say something subtle or obvious, the designer should start his actual work on the play by putting his plans on paper. He need not be a finished artist or clever draftsman to draw up his

plans. His idea is not to produce a beautiful picture but to work out in detail and with accuracy what he has in mind.

The beginner sometimes starts his construction without putting his plans on paper; and his settings frequently show his lack of careful planning. As he grows in experience, he learns the value of detailed planning on paper before construction work begins. No matter how simple the setting, there should be some floor plans and elevation sketches. The professional designer draws dozens of sketches and plans.

Why should he draw these plans? Because everyone makes mistakes, and mistakes can easily be made in stage scenery; and it is much easier to take an eraser and correct a mistake in a drawing than it is to make right a mistake in a half-constructed set; and it is much less expensive.

These plans may be in almost any form the designer wishes. They are only his notes—his carefully thought-out detailed notes —on what he is going to set on his stage. All that is asked is that he shall be able to read them clearly.

He is not ready to go to his stage carpenter with them, or (if he is also the carpenter) to start building them himself, until he has asked one last question: Will this scenery be practical? That is, will it fit the dimensions of the stage and not call for too great height or depth? Can it be constructed economically, and is there enough money to construct it? Are the materials and labor available to build it—is a piece of construction work called for which will have to be modified? And can the set be constructed so that it will be easily handled and shifted?

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SIXTY SCENERY SUGGESTIONS

On Scenery Construction

THE MAXIMUM width of standard scenery is five feet nine inches, because a wider flat will not go into a railroad car. Since most school scenery will never be asked to take a ride on a train, this width can be disregarded. A flat, ten feet wide, is just as permissible and may be more convenient than one, five feet nine inches.

Draperies and curtains should be hemmed at the bottom and weighted with a small chain or narrow strips of cloth filled with shot.

Small platforms are generally built in two parts: the floor and the holding frame. The frame is hinged to fold so that the platform may be stored flat.

When a hardwood floor in which stage screws may not be screwed is encountered, a piece of 1″ x 3″ lumber may be nailed to the floor without injuring it, if wire nails are used, and if they are driven in the cracks between the floor boards. The stage screw can then be screwed into the 1″ x 3″. When the authorities object even to this, a wider heavier board may be laid on the floor and weighted.

An assortment of hardware usable in stage work would include: hooks and screw eyes (for hooking short pieces of scenery together), pieces of strap iron (for beneath doors), stage screws, lash cleats, brace cleats, casters (for platforms), gliders (for bottom edges of flats), S hooks (for bracing and stiffening flats), stovepipe wire, piano wire, hinges, iron mending plates (for mending flats), and angle irons (for bracing corners).

Numbering the flats makes for convenience. Flats of different widths may be given different letters: two-foot flats lettered A, three-foot flats B, and so on. The numbers would then run A1, A2, A3, for the two-foot flats; B1, B2, B3, for the three-foot flats. The numbers are painted plainly on the backs of the flats.

Flameproofing of scenery is required by law in some states. When there is such a law, it should be complied with; but flameproofing does not guarantee that the scenery, especially the wooden frame, will not catch fire. Of course, every precaution should be taken to prevent fires, and fire extinguishers should be in convenient locations about the stage.

It is sometimes possible to buy lumber in random lengths and odd lots at a bargain price. Almost every length is usable in scenery construction and there is generally but little waste. If your budget is running low, you might ask your lumber dealer about this.

Directors sometimes wish a scene to be played behind a scrim or gauze. This theatrical gauze is a drop, hung downstage, which gives remoteness and indistinctness to a scene. A gauze is an interesting but somewhat expensive novelty; it is seldom used, and the money might better be spent elsewhere. The price of theatrical gauze is about three dollars a yard; a gauze yard measures thirty-six inches by thirty feet.

When the frame of a flat breaks, it is not a serious matter. It can be mended easily and quickly with an iron mending plate or a mending batten of 1″ x 3″ lumber, two or more feet long.

Clout nails are sometimes used instead of shingle or lath nails for nailing corner blocks and the like. They have square sides, clinch easily, and hold fast; but they are very difficult to unclinch and take out, and sometimes we want to make over a piece of scenery.

Lash lines should always be fastened to the same edge of the flats. If this system is not followed, we may find, when attempting to put a set together, that we have two lash lines at one edge and none at another. Another common way of fastening them is with pin hinges. One half of the hinge is screwed to the edge of each flat, the flats are placed edge to edge, and a nail or bent wire is

inserted in the hinge. Still another way is by hinging the flats together before they are painted so they fold inward, face to face. This way of hinging protects the faces of the flats and makes for easy handling of two large flats. With the application of two coats

BUTT JOINT   MITER JOINT   HALVED JOINT
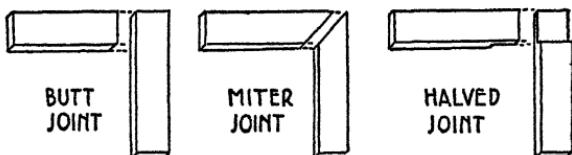
of paint, the hinges are well enough covered so they are not noticed by the audience.

All platform tops, stair landings, etc., should be padded to eliminate noise.

In constructing flats, a halved joint is stronger than the butt joint we have suggested; a miter joint is weaker and should not be used.

The question is sometimes asked: "Why not use composition board for covering flats? Then the scenery will never shake." Composition board is much more expensive, it makes the flats heavy and hard to handle, and it is much more difficult to repair when torn.

Composition board does not make satisfactory corner blocks because it lacks sufficient strength and gives too easily.

Composition board can be bent like stiff cardboard. For a curved surface, it is better than muslin.

When using composition board for ground rows, the uneven edge may be cut with a jig saw, a compass saw, or a sharp knife. The knife leaves a clean edge which does not have to be sand-papered, but it wears blisters on the hands.

Stage braces range from the homemade braces, consisting of a piece of 1″ x 2″ lumber, mitered at the ends, and nailed to the edge of a flat and to the floor, through small patented braces three feet long when extended (bought from any stage equipment house), to long braces with an extension of nearly twenty-four feet. The patented braces cost from $2.50 up.

Grass mats laid on the stage to represent plots of grass are not necessary. They are also undesirable because they are generally painted a violent green. Painted pieces of muslin (old muslin taken from flats is good) laid on, or tacked face down to the floor cloths, and painted in subdued tones of green, are satisfactory. ·Members of the audience sitting down front cannot see the stage floor, and the flat, painted muslin suggests grass to those in the balcony.

Door knobs should be door knobs and not small drawer knobs. Ordinarily, locks do not need to be used. A hole is bored through the side of the door frame, the dowel (the small length of iron with square sides) is inserted, and the knobs screwed into the dowel on both sides of the door.

The tie-off cleats—the lowest cleats on the flat—should be the same height on all flats, about two and a half feet. The lash lines can be tied more easily if these cleats are opposite each other.

A questionnaire brings the report that front curtains which lift up into the flies are preferable to draw curtains which pull away to the sides. Common objections to draw curtains are that they require more machinery for operation, they swing and sway too much, and they get out of order.

On Painting

When painting scenery, be sure to paint the edges of the flats which are to be seen.

Black is almost never used except for an accent here and there.

A tear or hole in a flat is repaired in this manner: a patch of muslin, slightly larger than the hole, is covered with kalsomine paint; the patch is then applied to the rear of the flat, over the hole; the edges of the hole are then smoothed against the patch from the face of the flat. This is an operation which two people can accomplish better than one.

Sometimes the flat acquires a bulge or a looseness. This can be remedied either by washing lightly the front of the flat with a brush, slightly wet, or by sprinkling water on the back of the flat. The muslin will respond to the treatment and shrink.

For a one-set play, wall paper may be used instead of paint. The paper is pasted onto the primed or painted muslin, not flat by flat, but onto the whole set as a unit. The paper is difficult to take off, sometimes ruining the flats for further use until re-covered.

Paint can be washed off the flats, but washing flats is scarcely worth the work and the mess.

Paint brushes should not be allowed to harden in the color.

When only one set is used in a play (and does not have to be struck), the cracks between the flats are frequently covered by what are called dutchmen. The dutchman is a strip of muslin, four inches wide, pasted over the crack from top to bottom of the flats, and painted when the flats are painted.

The common way of enlarging the design for a drop, from the sketch to the drop itself, is to draw the sketch to scale, a half inch or one inch to the foot, and square it off; then square the drop in one-foot squares and transfer the sketch. Another way is to photograph the original drawing on a lantern slide, and, with a projection lantern, project it upon the drop where it may be traced off.

In painting, as in make-up, only a few colors are essential. Yellow, blue, red, and white (occasionally black) are all that are absolutely necessary. Green is made from yellow and blue, orange from red and yellow, purple from red and blue, and so on. The colors are grayed with white.

Unbleached muslin can be used for hangings, either plain or painted with kalsomine or scenic color. The muslin has a soft color, and in heavier grades has body enough to hang well.

When a flat has become water stained, the stain cannot be made to disappear, by painting over the spot, until it has first been covered with clear shellac.

Shellac may be painted over the painted woodwork to give it a more realistic appearance. Shellac, however, plays strange tricks with the graining colors, making the woodwork darker, and giving it an uneven shine which is not always desirable. A piece of the painted woodwork should be tested with the shellac before it is applied to the set.

Designs (such as border designs) may be stenciled on scenery

or costumes. A paper known as stencil paper should be used for stencils; and the stencil paint must be thick.

Diamond-shaped panes for windows may be simulated easily with black insulation tape stretched diagonally across the window frames.

When painting a drop or flat, begin at the top and work down, so that the finished work will not be streaked from dripping paint.

A mixed paint will change color after it stands for a time. Do not paint one half of a flat one day, and the second half the next, and expect the two halves to match perfectly in color.

Too much size glue in the paint is worse than too little; the glue will crack the paint on the flat.

It is hard to say how much scenery a given quantity of paint will cover. Under average circumstances, one quart of paint should cover a primed flat, twelve by five feet.

If the set does not have to be handled much, or is to be used only once, colored chalks can be used for high-lights and for accenting shadows.

Learn to paint in big, broad strokes, and run the strokes in all directions.

On Design

One center of interest on the stage is better than two or three, and the center of the stage is not necessarily the place for the center of interest if the stage picture is to appear fresh and interesting.

The design should not call for an important piece of furniture or a set prop at the extreme right or left of the stage, except far downstage; otherwise, it may be outside the sight lines.

When the set is being designed, the question of sight lines, both horizontal and vertical, is not to be neglected.

In planning openings for important entrances during the course of the play, think of the back wall; an actor can always make an effective entrance walking downstage. In planning openings for important exits, think of the side walls; an actor finds it difficult to make an effective exit walking straight upstage.

A rectangular set with straight walls and no breaks is monotonous and uninteresting. The setting should be given variety in mass and line by breaking the wall with jogs, by bringing the fireplace and the chimney above it six inches or one foot into the

ELEVATION

SKY DROP

FLOOR PLAN
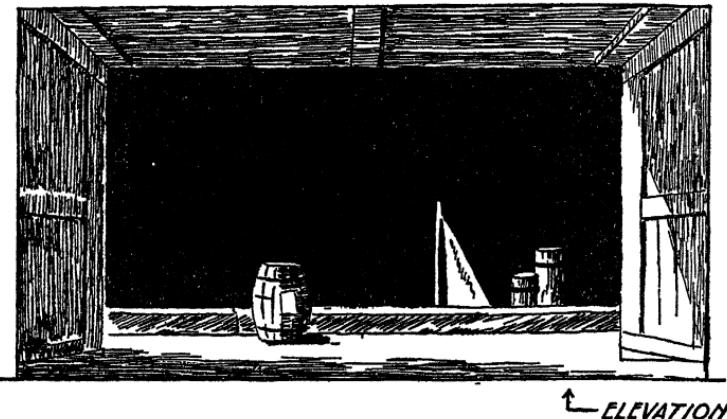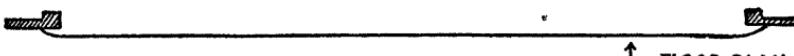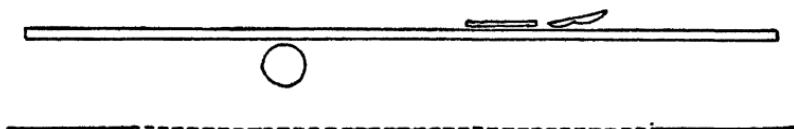
SUGGESTION FOR MASKING THE SIDES FOR LADY GREGORY'S
THE RISING OF THE MOON

room, by giving the room such irregularities of form as seem architecturally reasonable.

The design problem in many outdoor sets is to mask the sides of the stage. Often the designers can think of some appropriate structure downstage, at either side, which prevents the sides of the

stage from being seen by the audience and which is still reasonable to the setting. In Lady Gregory's *The Rising of the Moon,* for instance, not much space is needed for the action; it is reasonable to think of viewing a section of the quay and the barrel (necessary to the action) through the open end of a shed; so the side walls of the shed, placed downstage, and brought in stage several feet, can be used to mask the sides.

It is inadvisable to combine the actual and the artificial in scenery. For instance, a real rosebush against a painted trellis on a painted wall will not look right. Besides, its colors will look dead. A painted bush, or an artificial one painted in vivid colors of green and red, will seem more real than a real one.

To make the actors appear large, design the scenery and set props a little smaller than usual; to make them appear small, design the scenery oversize.

Think of stage levels, of elevating the stage here and there with platforms, landings, steps, ramps, stairs. This adds interest and variety to the set and gives the actors, when using the levels, a position of emphasis and strength.

Place fireplaces along the side walls rather than at stage back; they are much more usable here. A fireplace at the side motivates convenient arrangements of furniture and interesting crossings and groupings. If the fireplace is at the back, actors walking towards or standing before it are not only upstage, but have their backs to the audience.

A well-designed and properly painted set is the one which the audience accepts and forgets; if it comments on it as being striking or effective or beautiful, and keeps looking at it, the designer has gone too far.

Try to avoid the conventional arrangement of furniture, such as a table center, sofa right, and small table and two chairs left. There are many other ways of arranging furniture. Leave the central area open for movement.

Raking the sides of the set, that is, slanting the walls at the sides instage from the tormentors, is sometimes criticized. Raking

is a practical measure. When the sight lines are such that raking is not necessary, it should be discontinued; if raking is necessary to make the scenery and action visible, it should be used.

If top borders are in use on the stage in place of a ceiling, try designing a beam to run across the stage in the position of the conventional border.

Do not forget contrast. Contrast in the form, color, or line of some element in a scene, which sets it off from the other elements, adds significance and interest to a scene which might otherwise appear monotonous.

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LIGHTING: FUNCTIONS AND EQUIPMENT

Light as Drama

THE SCENE is a small school theater. The stage is set. Some boy who has been prevailed upon to "work back stage" is at the control board. The director is in the auditorium, facing the stage. It is dress rehearsal night, and up to this very moment nothing has been said about lighting the play. Now the director speaks to the boy:

"Oh, Frederick, turn on the lights, will you?"

Frederick turns on some white footlights, which because of their extreme downstage position, light up the whole of the proscenium arch; then a first and second border; then a flood light which is set up outside a window. These are all the lights he has, and the stage is filled with garish light.

The director does not see anything very wrong with the lighting. He says, "Oh, Frederick, dim your foots, will you? They're a little too strong."

Frederick obeys.

"There. . . . Now can you give us a little more light outside the window?"

By readjusting the position of the flood, Frederick manages to get more light outside the window.

"That's fine," comments the director. "There. . . . I guess that will do."

And it does.

On the night before this chapter was begun, the writers attended a dance recital by two nationally known dancers. The stage was more than adequate for such a recital, it contained seven thousand dollars' worth of lighting equipment, and the dancers ʿgave a good program; but the audience was disappointed, and justly so. They were disappointed because the lighting hindered rather than · helped the dancers in what they had to say.

For every dance number, six auditorium spotlights, red, blue, and amber, were thrown onto the stage; because of so much front lighting, the dancers always looked flat and poster-like.

The drapes at the rear of the stage, representing a space twenty-five by fifty feet, were lighted equally brilliantly from top to bottom; so, no accent was given the performers.

The dances represented a variety of moods, which the lighting made no endeavor to interpret.

Never once was the lighting directed from the sides so that the dancers could be given the light and shadow quality of sculpture: they were always two-dimensional posters.

One number, however, was applauded loudly. It was the dancers' one dramatic dance, which was so filled with bold line and striking pose, which was so clear in its idea and so strong in its drama, that the dancers were able to project it in spite of the bad lighting.

The scene in the school theater represents a situation in which equipment is lacking; the recital represents a disregard for the proper use of equipment; both proclaim a lack of appreciation of the dramatic value of light. The director in our first instance should have been perturbed over his even, glaring lighting, but he was not; the dancers, having adequate equipment for lighting, should have lighted their performance helpfully and dramatically, but they did not.

Light is dramatic. It is the most dramatic element in nature: more dramatic than form or color or movement. It is the light on the mountains turning them to blue and purple, it is the light on the ripening wheatfields changing them to a cloth of gold, it is the clear light above the desert veiling it in mystery, it is the long

shafts of light broken by gray shadows dramatizing our skyscraper streets, which thrills us. Yet, many school directors behave as if they were unaware of the dramatic value of light.

The artists have long since recognized it. During the nineteenth century an entire school of painters sought to discover a way to paint light more dramatically, that is, more naturally. Almost everyone reacts to Rembrandt's pictures because he has lighted them dramatically.

Plays have emotional, psychological, and aesthetic aspects. So has light.

We have looked down an alleyway, mysterious and dim in the twilight, we have seen the strange light before an impending storm, or the worm cozy light of a living room, or the cold weak light of a winter's day, and in each case we have experienced a distinct emotion; for light arouses emotion as truly as does action.

We have had six gray days, monotonous because of the monotony of light; then suddenly the sun comes out; suddenly there is a new light and a new world. We experience a psychological reaction to the light and shade which have been absent so long.

Again, we have looked at a landscape in a certain light and have had the same pleasant feeling we experience when looking at a well-composed picture; then when the light changes the feeling is gone. It is the light which has given the picture in nature an aesthetic interest.

We repeat: plays have emotional, psychological, and aesthetic aspects; light has emotional, psychological, and aesthetic aspects; since our plays are given indoors and we must light our stages, since we now possess equipment capable of varying the sources, intensity, and color of light, it is surely reasonable that we begin to make more and better use of this very dramatic element in our productions.

Light on the Stage

No one needs to be reminded that light, both in nature and on the stage, comes from various directions, differs greatly in intensity, and appears to have a variety of colors.

We have just suggested that light in nature has several functions: it gives visibility to objects, it stirs emotions and promotes psychological reactions, and it brings aesthetic pleasure.

With these things in mind, we will consider the possible uses of light on the stage.

Light as Illumination

Perhaps the simplest division of light as it is used on the stage would be: light as illumination, light as interpretation, and light as design.

Lighting first became a necessity when, just before 1600, the natural light of the sun was shut out by a roof over the theater. For two hundred and fifty years thereafter the efforts of producers were directed towards securing enough light to render facial expression and stage business visible to the audience. With the development of the electric light and especially of the incandescent lamp, the effort was finally rewarded.

At last there was plenty of light. What was more natural now, after centuries of semidarkness, than for the theater workers to flood their stages with light? The normal and effective location for rows of lights seemed to be completely around the stage frame; therefore, a strip of lights was placed on the floor downstage, a strip at either side, and a strip above. There developed, then, a row of footlights partly sunk into the stage floor, one or more borders of lights suspended from battens above the stage, and a strip of lights downstage at either side, just back of the tormentors. There was nothing beautiful about this lighting; the one idea in 1890 was not beauty but plenty of illumination.

This illumination, while it at last gave the audience an opportunity to see the stage and actors clearly, did not please the artists; for the third dimension had now been taken from scenery; light had been distorted from its natural behavior which gives to objects lighted surfaces and shadows; now, all was flat, even, uninteresting. The artists saw that this new light was working against rather than for the play.

The artists reasoned that although the words of the play should

be heard, the actors should not speak every speech with the same strong emphasis; they argued that, though the scenery should be visible, the painters had learned that it was unnecessary to paint the set in one bright color from top to bottom; therefore, they said, although the stage should be illuminated, it was not necessary to illuminate it with the same intensity and same color throughout. Such a course was contrary to the art of the actor and painter, and contrary to nature as well.

Experimentation began which led to control and distribution of stage light, so that in addition to a general subdued illumination of the scene, there could be accents of more intense light where such light was needed for emphasis—and this meant especially on the actors during their scenes of action.

Many of our school stages are wired for lighting which is similar to the lighting in the theaters of 1890: a row of lights below on the floor of the stage and one or two borders above. The lighting has no flexibility; there is no way of controlling or distributing the light; and, in consequence, light has no opportunity to play its part in the play.

The teacher-director, finding such obsolete lighting equipment in his theater, and knowing little or nothing about lighting, accepts what he has because he believes nothing can be done about it. In this chapter we hope to be able to show him that something can be done.

LIGHT AS INTERPRETATION

Another thing the artists discovered was that, since stage light could vary in intensity, direction, and color, this light could be used to assist in the interpretation of the play.

The scene painter gives his set a color which is in harmony with the idea of the play and which intensifies its mood. Why not use light in the same way? The painter gives his set a dark tone or a light one as the play is serious or gay; light can do the same sort of thing. And, whereas color on scenery is not mobile, cannot be changed during a scene, light is mobile; if the mood of the play changes during the scene, light can follow this change from de-

spair to hope or from happiness to sorrow. So the artists reasoned; and light came to be used as a factor in interpreting the play.

It was discovered that light can give us the effect of a bright sunshiny day, of a sunless day, of twilight, of a moonlit night; and, being mobile, that it can pass from one time of day to another. It can also give us the warm light of the south, the cold light of the north, the subdued cozy light of a modern living room. So it came to be used to suggest the time and place of action.

Some plays are warm, some cool; there are corresponding colors in light. If the play is gay, the scene can be brightly lighted; if it is sad, darker shadows can be used, less intensity, and cooler colors. If the scene is one of impending doom or mystery, the stage can be dimmed, accenting only the places of action. So light may be used to intensify the mood of the play.

Occasionally a play has some supernatural aspect. Lighting, it was discovered, is especially effective in the interpretation of the supernatural. The stage may be dark, and only a head, slowly becoming visible, moves about the room, and slowly disappears; or a pale-green light, unlike any light in our ordinary world, transports us to a place where strange and unnatural events may reasonably transpire.

In the making of shadows, light may become a part of the action, and may supply an effective piece of business. The shadow of a sinister figure, falling on a wall, may be more effective, more dramatic than the speech of the lone character in the room as he whispers, "I am afraid—afraid!"

In a university production of *Hamlet*, the graveyard scene was played on two levels, with a large ramp extending downstage center. Ophelia's grave was at the top of the ramp (thus avoiding the necessity for a trapdoor in the stage); to the right were gray walls; to the left a wall and some tall pine trees in silhouette; at the left rear stage were a few gravestones. The burial was to be in late afternoon; the sun was to set off stage at left.

During the first part of the scene, with the gravediggers and Hamlet on stage, the light was of medium intensity, the area

around the grave being accented. As the funeral procession approached, the light began to fade. During the Hamlet-Laertes struggle, the sun was setting—a warmer light was thrown from off left and the dark shadows of the trees and gravestones began to lengthen and spread across the stage. As the funeral procession disappeared left, walking towards the light, the light grew dimmer, the shadows darker and longer, until they fell upon the walls at right. For Hamlet's exit at the end of the scene, the director had the actor mount the ramp and fall upon one knee above the still-open grave. (The director's motivation for this action was to demonstrate once more to the audience that Hamlet truly cared for Ophelia.) As Hamlet approached the grave, twilight was falling, and he was only faintly visible to the audience; but, as he knelt, one last weak ray of light from off left touched his face. Then Horatio lifted him up and the two walked off in the gathering darkness.

Throughout the scene, the interpretation was aided by the lighting; place, time, and changing mood were followed; and the equipment used was simple and comparatively inexpensive.

Light as Design

We have spoken of the usefulness of design in the setting, of the inadvisability of using design solely for design's sake. A moment of thought will show that light, through change in direction and variation in intensity and color, may be used in the stage design. This is the third function of light we would mention.

We may have a setting or environment which is made up of many elements: of pieces of scenery, openings, hangings, furniture, properties. The director and technical director have thought of unity and worked for unity, but perhaps they have not quite attained their goal; it may be that the whole of the setting can be bound together into a unit by shafts or spreads of light, or by colors of light, or by different light intensities which throw some of the stage into shadow and some into prominence.

Light may bring harmony into a scene which is inharmonious.

Light and shadow may be grouped together in a pictorial design which is dramatic and right for the scene. Light is especially useful for the application of emphasis. For instance, the director wishes close concentration on a dialogue between two characters. It is motivated so that the stage is dimly lighted except for an area around a table, left center, above which is a shaded lamp (the lamplight augmented by spots thrown from above). The two characters are seated at the table. Light has made them the only point of focus, of emphasis in the room; and the audience more easily and naturally will concentrate upon them.

Lighting Equipment

Stage lighting equipment is essentially very simple. It consists of several strips or rows of lights; of several metal boxes, some of which contain lenses for concentration of light, others containing no lenses for diffusion of light; some color mediums; a control board to which all the lights are wired; and dimmers which vary the intensity of the light. This is all. Even a complex and costly theater system consisting of thousands of lights and hundreds of units, represents only rearrangements, additions of accessories, and refinements of these simple units.

The rows or strips of lights are used for general illumination; the boxed lights are used for specific illumination.

With these units, intensity of light can be varied (by using the dimmers); direction of light can be changed (by moving the boxed lights); color can be changed (through the different color mediums).

THE FOOTLIGHTS

The footlights, as everybody knows, consist of a row of lights in or on the floor of the stage, just in front of the curtain line. The exact location of the footlights is important. They should not be placed so far front that, when lighted, they illuminate the entire front of the theater. The area above the lamps should not be open so that light is thrown up to the ceiling. They should be

partly sunk into the floor and partly covered so that their light is directed upwards and towards the rear, entirely within the proscenium opening.

Footlights are generally arranged in three circuits, each circuit containing different-colored lights.

Footlights are of three common types: those consisting of a row of sockets in a metal reflecting trough, into which colored lamps are screwed; those consisting of a row of clear lamps, each in an individual reflecting case, each case covered with a glass color medium; and those consisting of a row of clear lamps, set in compartments, each fitted to hold a color frame for gelatin.

Footlights are usually permanently installed and cannot be moved about. A type of disappearing footlight has been devised and is in use in some theaters. Such footlights, when not in use, can be turned over until they are flush with the stage floor. In other theaters portable footlights are used: sections of trough which can be joined together, placed in position, and removed after use. This construction of footlights is the least satisfactory.

BORDERS

Borders are strips or rows of lights hanging above the stage. The conventional arrangement, now becoming obsolete, is three borders, one just back of the proscenium opening, the second midstage, the third at rear stage; each border extends the entire width of the stage. Today the first border is often dispensed with or is supplemented by a batten which holds a number of small flood lights and spotlights for specific illumination; the second border is greatly shortened for there is no need of strong general illumination at the sides of the set; the third is sometimes retained, sometimes not. A long third border does serve the purpose of general illumination on a wide back drop.

Like the footlights, the borders are usually on three circuits; the lamps may be open and colored, or may be clear and equipped with glass or gelatin color mediums; and they are attached to dimmers and are operated from the control board.

When possible, the borders should be movable and not fixed.

STRIP LIGHTS

Strip lights are small sections of lights, set in troughs similar to border troughs, are movable, and are placed either horizontally or vertically above windows and outside entrances and in other places where general illumination is desired for small areas. They should be fitted for color frames or have some other means for the use of colored light; and they, like other units, should be controlled from the control board.

Footlights, borders, and strip lights are the common units used for general illumination.

SPOTLIGHTS

A spotlight consists of a high-powered lamp, placed in a metal box which contains (a) a piano-convex lens for focusing the light

STANDARD LIGHTING UNITS
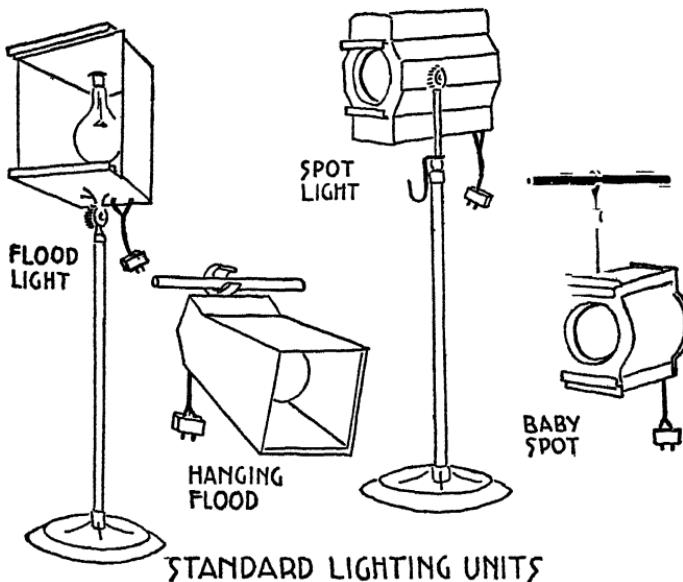
on a small area, (b) a focusing slide for adjusting the focus of the light, (c) a reflector behind the lamp socket, and (d) two grooves

in front of the lens for holding a small color frame. Spotlights are either set on standards and operated from the floor, or may be clamped to iron-pipe battens above or at the sides of the stage.

Baby spotlights are small spotlights which are used when a light of lower intensity is needed, or when it is difficult to conceal the larger spotlights from the audience. The large spotlight carries a 500, 750, or 1000 watt lamp; the baby spot carries a 250 or 400 watt lamp.

In the older theaters, light from the spots was thrown on the stage from the balcony rail. Today, several high-powered spotlights are sometimes set in the ceiling near the rear of the auditorium, partially concealed from the audience, and so adjusted and focused as to light up the downstage area of the stage. Such ceiling lights are called beam lights (because a real or fake beam is often used to mask them from the audience).

Spotlights are extremely useful. They light definite areas without much spill of light. They can call the attention of the audience to a particular part of the stage or to an actor or group of actors.

FLOOD LIGHTS

Flood lights resemble spotlights in many respects. They use a high-powered lamp, are set in a metal box, may either be placed on a floor standard or hung, and they are equipped with holders for color frames. They are unlike spotlights in that they need no focusing slide and contain no lens, and so they flood a larger area with light than the spotlight does. Moonlight coming in a window, sunlight falling through a doorway, a light off stage in a hall, are better simulated with a flood than with a spotlight.

DIMMERS

A dimmer is an apparatus which regulates the amount of light coming from a particular light unit. It is a variable resistance coil, connected in series with the lamps. A different amount of current is caused to flow through the lamp filament, and so the brightness of the lamp may be increased or decreased. The "steps" in the dimmer should be proportioned so that the light will seem

to increase gradually and smoothly, and not seem to jump from one intensity to another.

It is advisable to have one dimmer for each circuit or light unit, and to have the dimmers interlocking so that either one unit may be dimmed or a combination of units dimmed at once. The dimmers are operated from the control board. Dimmers are essential for varying the intensity of the lights.

COLOR MEDIUMS

Colored light is produced by means of some medium which absorbs certain colors and permits other colors to pass through it; as when a red medium absorbs the violet, blue, green, and orange rays, and passes only the red rays of light. A number of different kinds of color mediums are in use.

When open lights of low wattage were widely used a generation ago, the common medium was an aniline dye or "light dip." This medium may still be used. The dye comes in several colors: blue, red, orange, green. The bulbs are suspended in sockets and are lighted. The dye is placed in a can, the bulb is immersed in the dye, removed, and allowed to dry. There are only a limited number of colors, and the dye burns off in a short time.

The medium most widely used at present is the gelatin sheet. These sheets come in a great variety of colors and are comparatively inexpensive. The sheets are about twenty by twenty-two inches in size and cost approximately twenty cents per sheet. They have the disadvantages of fading with time and of cracking and breaking when overheated or too dry.

The gelatin can be easily cut and fitted into a frame. Two kinds of frame are used: a tin frame consisting of two sheets of tin containing square or round openings; the gelatin is placed between the two sheets, which are then bound firmly together, and the frame is inserted in the holder which is attached in front of the lens or compartment housing the lamp. For flood lights, two wooden frames are made, wires are stretched across them to protect the gelatin sheet, the gelatin is placed between the two frames which are then screwed or clasped together.

Transolene is a medium somewhat like gelatin but is more expensive. It also comes in many colors, though not as many as gelatin. Its advantage over gelatin is that it is much more durable.

Cellophane can be used as a color medium, though it is not recommended. In using it, several sheets must be put together to get sufficient color; and when the shade of color is obtained, the light which passes through is not so strong as it would be if a gelatin sheet of the same color were used.

Colored glass is the most expensive of the color mediums to buy, but it is cheapest in the long run because the color does not fade and the glass is tough and very durable. In many of the footlights and border lights with individual reflecting cases which are now being manufactured, glass is used as the color medium.

Other usable lighting equipment such as the Linnebach projector and the "effect machine" might be listed, but the equipment we have described is adequate for most plays and for most school theaters.

Minimum Equipment for the School Theater

The above title may seem rather absurd because the "minimum equipment" is usually whatever we have on our stage, and we do what we can with it; yet it may not be out of place to set down a modest equipment which we *need* on our stages in order to produce the different intensities, directions, and colors of light necessary for making our lighting a constructive factor in the interpretation of the play.

We need a row of footlights which light up the stage and not the proscenium arch, which are arranged in three circuits to hold three colors of lights, with each circuit on a separate dimmer. It would help if these footlights were also arranged in three sections so that we could light only the right side, the center, or the left side of the stage as occasion demanded, but this is probably asking too much and we will have to use our spotlights for this restricted area illumination.

We can dispense with the first border, but if we do, we need a pipe batten and outlets for at least a dozen small spots and flood lights.

We need a short midstage border, ten or twelve feet long, suspended at center stage and easily moved about. It should have three circuits with each circuit connected with a dimmer.

Some writers inform us that the third border can be shortened or done away with altogether. We believe that a long third border, with three circuits, saves time when we must light a back drop, especially if the scene is outdoors. If we do not use it, we shall need more sections of strip lights and more flood units.

We should have two spotlights, regular size, on standards, and capable of carrying lamps of from 500 to 1000 wattage. We should also have half a dozen baby spots, with short sections of pipe and clamps, so they may be clamped to the pipe battens.

As for flood lights, we can use two large floods of the Olivette type, on standards, and employing lamps of from 500 to 1000 wattage; and two small floods which can be suspended from the pipe battens.

We need a number of gelatin color frames and sheets of gelatin, or colored glass mediums, or some other mediums whereby we can change and blend our light colors on the stage.

Several floor pockets at right, rear, and left stage are essential in order to plug in our various floor units.

We need a control board which controls not only all the stage lights, but the auditorium lights as well. The most reasonable location for the control board is somewhere in the auditorium, possibly in the orchestra pit, possibly at the rear of the balcony where the operator can see clearly what the lights are doing on the stage; but we cannot hope for this, and must be satisfied if the board is placed at one side of the stage where the operator can view as much of the stage as this position will permit.

The board should be of the dead front type in which all the live parts are hidden and out of reach.

The board should be flexible. Many old boards are wired for permanent control with no provision made for making new com-

binations of outlets with dimmers and switches. The board, especially in small theaters, should permit of variable control, allowing for some means of connecting various outlets with the several dimmers and switches on the board.

Lastly, we need a bank of dimmers capable of handling both the individual units separately or all the units together. If the board has permanent control, we shall require a large bank of dimmers; if it has variable control, a bank of ten to fourteen dimmers will take care of any problem in varying the light intensity.

Homemade Equipment

Lighting equipment is expensive. To purchase the equipment we have recommended would cost approximately $1000. A control board with eight round plate dimmers (the usual kind) would cost from $300 to $350; standard spotlights cost from $40 up; baby spots from $5 to $15; and flood lights of the Olivette type, $20 or more. Sufficient lighting equipment to do some of the things, even the simplest things, we want to do could not be purchased for less than $500.

The question, then, may be raised: "Since equipment is so expensive, can we ourselves make it?" The answer is, "With qualifications, yes."

There was a time when no amateur group thought of writing its own plays, building its own scenery, or making its own costumes; now, original plays are written, scenery constructed and painted, costumes and properties made, all within the theater group. It is not impossible to believe that the time will come when we will construct and put together our lighting units just as now we do our scenery.

If lighting equipment is to be made, somebody on the staff must be competent to do electrical wiring; he should be familiar with the National Electrical Code on the point of theater wiring; and he had better do nothing without consultation with a local licensed electrician. Furthermore, either he or someone who is to help him must be a good amateur tinsmith.

A FLOOD LIGHT

For a flood light we need a metal box, ventilated, fitted to hold a lamp, and permitting no spill of light except in one direction.

A deep tin cracker-box is easy to work with because of its square shape; a galvanized iron pail is harder to work with be-

PIECE OF TIN 4˝×2˝
VENTILATION SLIT
ARCH OF TIN OVER SLIT

HOLE FOR ELECTRIC SOCKET

COLOR FRAME

STRIP OF TIN TO HOLD COLOR FRAME
STRIP OF WOOD
EDGE OF BOX BENT BACK

SIMPLE HOMEMADE FLOOD LIGHT
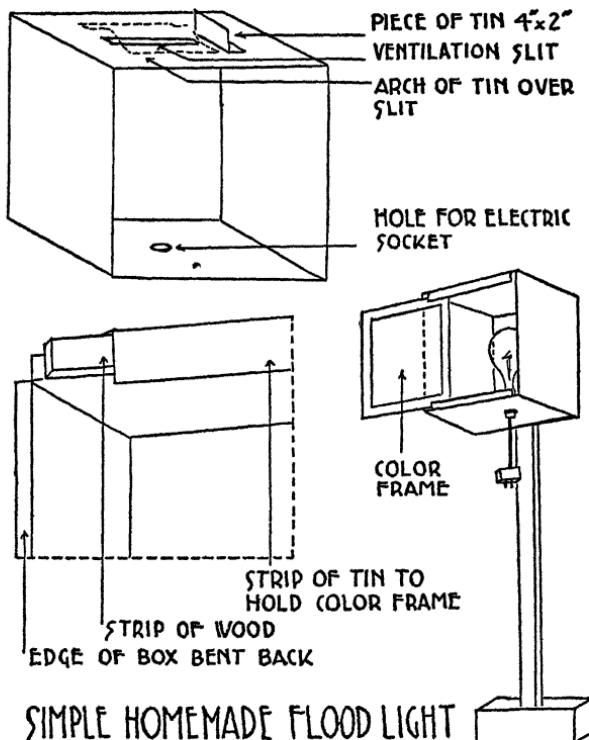
cause it is round, but it is sturdier and more durable. First, we decide on a top and a bottom. (We will use the pear-shaped lamp ordinarily used on flood lamps, which will burn vertically with the base either up or down.) We decide on putting the lamp base in the bottom. So, in the bottom of the box we cut a round hole

with a cold chisel, so that an electric socket will fit tightly into it.

The box must have ventilation, and ventilation should be at the top. Therefore, in the top we cut a slit about three inches long and three-quarters of an inch wide. We cut a piece of tin five by three inches and solder it in an arch shape over the slit. We still have an opening at either end of the arch. So, one inch from each end of this soldered arch, rectangular pieces of tin, four by two inches and standing upright, are soldered. With this arrangement we get sufficient ventilation, and because of the arch of tin and the upright flaps very little light escapes.

We need some attachment on the front of our box to hold a color frame. If the box is square and deep enough, we can frame the front opening in four light pieces of wood, screwed to the tin on the outside of the box. On the top and bottom of this frame, strips of tin, bent at right angles, are fastened; these strips of tin leave grooves into which the color frame may be slipped, and have projections downward from the top and upward from the bottom to hold the frame in place.

If the light box is round, a square piece of tin is cut, larger than the front opening. An opening is cut in this square, slightly smaller than the opening of the box. The piece of tin is soldered to the front of the box. The tin is bent at the top and bottom to form a groove and holder for the color frame.

The interior of the box is painted with gloss white or white enamel; the exterior with black.

If we wish to put our flood on a floor standard, the very simplest and cheapest is to bolt the back of the box to a piece of 2″ x 2″ lumber, five feet long. The 2″ x 2″ upright is nailed into a wooden box, sixteen by sixteen inches, and the box is filled with sand.

We must be careful about the wire we use. Here our licensed electrician will tell us the wire which possesses the proper current-carrying capacity and which is within the law. No. 14 stage cable is a wire carrying fifteen amperes; it is safe and within the National Code.

A SPOTLIGHT

For a spotlight we again start with a metal box, but this time it should be longer than the box for a flood light. A big coffee pot, a gallon paint can, or a piece of stovepipe may be used. A ventilator should be made as for a flood light. The spotlight, however, needs a reflector and a lens, and the lamp must be movable backward and forward for focusing. To install these requires more ingenuity and more careful work.

HANDLE BOLTED ON
VENTILATOR AS FOR FLOOD
FRONT EDGE CUT FOR CRIMPING OVER LENS
COVER KEPT TO OPEN SPOT
SLIT FOR LIGHT BASE
REFLECTOR ATTACHED TO COVER
LIGHT BASE AND HANDLE
COMPLETED SPOT
HOMEMADE SPOTLIGHT
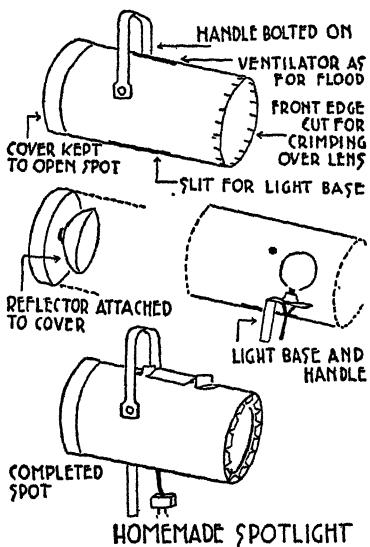
A piece of polished tin, a convex mirror, a reflector from an automobile headlight, or a kerosene lamp reflector should be fastened near the back of the pot or bucket to serve as a reflector for the lamp.

A plano-convex lens may be bought from a light equipment house, or an automobile headlight lens may be used. A tin frame such as we made for the flood lights may be soldered to the front opening. The lens is placed in front of the tin, and the edges of the frame are bent forward and crimped against the lens to hold it in place.

To make the lamp movable, a slit is cut in the bottom of the box, four inches long and three-quarters of an inch wide. A light base is fastened to a piece of heavy tin; one end of this tin is narrowed to a half inch, bent at right angles, and put through the slit. The part of the tin holding the base now rests on the floor of the box, above the slit. The wiring also passes through the slit. The piece of tin which protrudes serves as a handle which will move the lamp backward and forward. Some light will spill

through this slit, but not enough to do much damage. This arrangement, while not perfect, will work.

If a small spotlight is needed on a dimly lighted stage, remember a high-powered flashlight may serve the purpose.

Footlights and Borders

The making of footlights and border lights needs only a word. For both foots and borders, porcelain base sockets should be used. For footlights, the sockets are fastened to a length of 1″ x 4″ lumber. Long pieces of tin, about eight inches wide, are nailed along one edge of the 1″ x 4″ and are curved above the sockets. The tin should not extend too high above the stage floor, just high enough to allow the lamps to be screwed into the sockets. One, two, or three circuits of lamps may be wired. The lamps, in each circuit, should not be spaced farther than nine or ten inches apart. Forty-watt lamps can be used, and colored light obtained by dipping the bulbs.

In constructing a border, a board 1″ x 3″ may be used, and the tin should curve downward on both sides, the light sockets being placed in the middle of this arch of tin.

A Dimmer

We may explain the making and operation of a simple dimmer as follows:

A piece of stage cable or extension cord contains two wires. Let us assume that we have a piece of cord, one end of which is attached to a lamp, the other to a stage plug. *One* of the wires is cut and the outer insulation removed for a distance of two feet on each side of the cut; the other wire remains intact, or it may be cut and spliced together again, making it three feet shorter than it was.

A large earthenware or glass jar is filled with water into which is poured a half pint of salt.

One end of the wire which has been cut is fastened to a piece of metal such as a copper plate or a copper hinge. This piece is

dropped to the bottom of the jar. Another piece of metal, copper or galvanized iron, triangular in shape, is fastened to the other end of the cut wire.

The plug is connected with an outlet. The second wire is raised above the jar. As the point of its piece of triangular metal touches the salt solution, the light begins to come on slowly; as the metal is lowered, it grows brighter; when it comes in contact with the first piece of metal lying at the bottom of the jar, there is no longer any resistance and the light burns full strength.

Even simpler than this would be to attach the first wire to a galvanized bucket filled with salt solution; the second wire is then attached to a piece of metal as before, and the metal is lowered into the bucket.

It is difficult to make equipment which is as satisfactory as light units which are purchased from a stage equipment house; but if the budget is low, certain units can be constructed and made to serve.

PIECE OF METAL

SALT SOLUTION

PIECE OF METAL
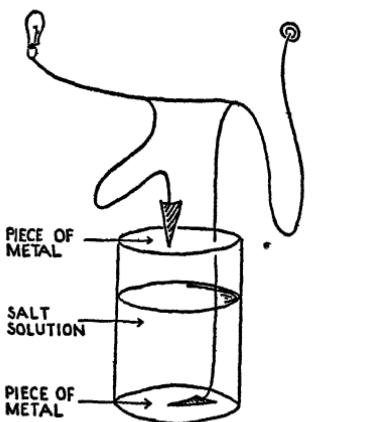
SIMPLE DIMMER ARRANGEMENT

27

LIGHTING THE PLAY

The Subject of Light Color

WE LIKE to be told in a book that if this and that are done a certain result will follow. Unfortunately, when we come to the subject of color, advice requires too many qualifications, and results are far from certain.

For example, a painter, thinking in terms of pigment colors, will insist that the primary colors are red, yellow, and blue. An electrician, thinking in terms of light color, will tell us that the primaries are red, green, and blue. While a psychologist, thinking of color as a sensation produced by radiant energy, will declare that the primary colors are red, yellow, blue, green, black, and white. The theater is interested in all three viewpoints; therefore, in the theater, color becomes not one thing but several.

And when different writers begin to discuss the *qualities* of color there is no agreement on terminology. One writer will say that a color has three properties: intensity, value, and hue; a second speaks of hue and luminosity; another lists the properties as hue, value, and chromo; still another states that color possesses brilliance, hue, and saturation.

What if we confine ourselves to light color and accept the statement that the primary colors are red, green, and blue? We have been told that when two primary colors are mixed they produce a color which is the complement of the third color; so, by mixing red and blue lights, we should get a magenta which is the complement of green. We have also been told that two complements

tend to neutralize each other. By mixing a red and blue or blue violet, we presumably get a magenta; a magenta light, therefore, thrown on a green costume will, theoretically, turn its color to gray.

This theory, however, works out in practice only when the color is *pure* color. We use an incandescent lamp which does not give out a pure white light; the rays of this light lack sufficient blue to produce a white light, therefore the light is always a little redder than it should be. Also, our blue gelatin medium allows some red to pass through. Also, the green in our costume may be yellow green or blue green. So, in practice we will not get the neutralization which the theory says we should get.

Because of our inability to get pure light color, because certain colors in costumes or scenery are more intense than others, several people, setting out to chart the effect of colored light on colored materials, might arrive at the following different conclusions.

One: red light on red produces red; two: red light on red produces gray red, because red falling on red tends to wash out the color unless some contrasting color is present; three: red light falling on red produces a more intense red, because there is a contrasting color present.

One: red light on violet produces red gray; two: red light on violet produces purple.

One: red light on orange produces red orange; two: red light on orange produces red; three: red light on orange produces red gray.

One: red light on blue produces violet; two: red light on blue produces black.

In other words, there are too many qualifying factors to permit generalizations.

Again, we are sometimes told that colors have meaning; that red has one psychological effect on an audience and blue another. But we begin to encounter difficulties when we try to ascribe exact meanings to any color.

We consider red. We begin to list its meanings. Soon our list shows us that red may suggest, under different conditions, anger,

crime, passion, hatred, patriotism, purity, shame, health, creative power, excitement, haste, authority, Harvard University, and communism; and we have only begun: for mixed with a little gray it may suggest decay, monotony, October, fading hope, and so on.

To attempt to ascribe meaning to color without taking into account the specific circumstances under which the color is used, and without considering further the form or pattern of the color area, is well-nigh hopeless. In a war play, the red in the flag may suggest patriotism; in a sex play, a red dress on a woman may suggest prostitution. In a gay play, an area of red on a back wall in the form of a rose may suggest beauty and romance; in a murder mystery, an area of red in the pattern of a pool of blood may suggest crime.

These paragraphs should warn us that we will encounter difficulties when we try to reduce to simple formulas the use of light color on our stage. We must remember that the use of colored light is new and still undeveloped; that color is a complex subject upon which different people hold different viewpoints. Some day we may know about color and its use on the stage, as we now know something about the equally complex process of direction. Until then, most of us will do well to use light color harmoniously and in simple combinations with pigment and fabric colors.

Suggestions for Using Light Color

From our limited knowledge we may say some things about color which can be applied, with reservations, to our use of stage color. A chart, while admitting of exceptions, may be helpful if looked upon as approximate rather than absolute truth. Such charts are the following:

Red light on red tends to produce red.
" " on violet " " " purple.
" " on orange " " " red orange.
" " on black " " " purple black.
" " on yellow " " " orange.

Red light on blue tends to produce violet.
"   "   on green   "   "   "   gray red.

Blue light on red tends to produce violet.
"   "   on violet   "   "   "   blue violet.
"   "   on orange   "   "   "   brown.
"   "   on black   "   "   "   blue black.
"   "   on yellow   "   "   "   green.
"   "   on blue   "   "   "   blue.
"   "   on green   "   "   "   blue green.

Amber light on red tends to produce red.
"   "   on violet   "   "   "   muddy brown.
"   "   on orange   "   "   "   orange.
"   "   on black   "   "   "   dusty black.
"   "   on yellow   "   "   "   yellow.
"   "   on blue   "   "   "   muddy brown.
"   "   on green   "   "   "   muddy brown.

(All costume fabrics should be chosen in the light which is to be used, if that is possible; do not depend upon theory or a color chart.)

Red light mixed with blue light tends to produce magenta.
Blue light   "   "   green light   "   "   "   blue green.
Green light   "   "   red light   "   "   "   yellow.
Yellow light   "   magenta light   "   "   "   red.
Blue-green light   "   yellow light   "   "   "   green.
Magenta light   "   blue-green light   "   "   blue.

We have distinguished between general and specific illumination; we have suggested that the footlights and borders can be used for general illumination, the spotlights and flood lights for specific illumination. The color of light we use for our general illumination may be what we reasonably think of as "natural" light color, that is, white for sunlight, blue for moonlight, straw for indoor light, amber for lamplight. Therefore, the colors most useful in footlights and borders are white, amber, and blue. However, it is possible to make these same colors with green, blue,

and red (for sunlight), blue or blue green (for moonlight), and red and green (for lamplight).

If amber light is to be used, the painter and costumer must remember that violet, blue, and green turn a muddy color under this light.

For most plays, the useful colors for spotlights and flood lights are amber and blue, though a large number of colors, especially green, red, and magenta, will find an occasional use. Since amber tends to give the actor's make-up a yellowish color, a special pink gelatin, sometimes called "surprise pink," is preferable; it affects costume and scenery colors very little and gives the complexion a more natural appearance. Remember, one color may be transposed upon another; if gelatin frames are used, a yellow frame may be placed in the holder, a blue placed in front of it, and the color from the spot or flood has been changed to green.

While we may not be able to set down concrete meanings for different colors, we can divide them into colors which produce the effect of warmth and of coolness. Red, orange, and yellow are warm colors; green and blue are cool.

When an actor on the stage is lighted with but one spotlight, coming, let us say, from the upper left of the stage, the right side

FACE LIGHTED BY
ONE SPOTLIGHT

FACE CROSS-
LIGHTED

of his face will be in deep shadow and the left side in strong light. Since there will be no shadows on the left side, we will have this half of the face well lighted but flat in appearance, while the right half will appear unnaturally dark. This is overcome by cross-lighting. In cross-lighting, one shaft of light comes from left

stage, a second shaft from right stage. One of the shafts is stronger than the other in order to keep some face shadows. The two shafts cross near the area of action.

A warm and a cool color may be used when cross-lighting actors' faces.

Crossed colored lights may also be thrown on curtains or on the draperies of the set with interesting results. For example, if a blue is crossed with a yellow on a gray curtain which hangs in folds, the tops of the folds will appear gray white, while the shadows will be various shades of blue, blue green, green, and yellow.

This suggests the thought that colored light may lend an appearance of richness and beauty to the stage; it suggests that while lighting equipment is expensive, good lighting often permits the use of inexpensive materials in the construction of scenery and the making of costumes. For instance, cheap cotton flannel, dyed blue and lighted with blue light (not too dark), will be almost as effective as velvet.

A setting should have a color scheme and lighting should be a part of this scheme. It is easy to make it a part, if the designer thinks of his light color when he begins to design the set and does not wait until after the set is painted. A color scheme embracing scenery, lights, and costumes may be designed with a color scheme of complementary colors having contrasting accents; or with adjacent colors such as red, red violet, violet, blue violet, blue; or with different intensities of one color such as bright green, medium green, gray green; or with bright colors combined with white and black. The color of lights, we urge again, should be incorporated in the scheme.

We have called attention to the fact that, in painting a set, a flat coat will give the walls an uninteresting appearance; to avoid this, we have suggested that the walls be spattered or stippled or sponged. If a set with gray walls is stippled with blue, red, and green, and a white light is thrown on the set, the walls appear gray; but if red light is added to the white light, the walls change in appearance, taking on a red tone; and if then the light changes

to green, the walls lose their red tone and appear to be a dull green. Therefore, when a unit set is used in a play, and the set is stippled or spattered, the color of the set may be changed in tone for the different acts by changing the color of the lighting.

We have said that amber light takes the natural color away from make-up. We might here emphasize that moonlight blue turns rouged cheeks and lips black, that red light kills all rouge, that green light turns make-up gray and ghastly. Once more we caution that make-up should always take into account the intensity and color of the lights.

Lighting the Play

We repeat for the electrician what we have said for the other theater workers: the electrician needs, first, theory and objective, and second, practice. As preparation for lighting an actual play, it would be time well spent if he took several plays and studied them for mood and meaning; drew his floor plans; then worked out a complete light plot, paying attention to the mood of the play, acting areas, motivation, as well as to his actual stage and the lighting equipment he has available.

PREPARING THE LIGHT PLOT

The electrician should have for his own study a copy of the play to be produced. (We assume that the director, in choosing this play, has taken into account the stage and lighting possibilities of his theater.) Either after consultation with the director and technical director, or after watching rehearsals and studying the scenery designs, the electrician begins on his light plan. He thinks of the general illumination in respect to its color and intensity; of the areas which must be high-lighted for action; of the background and its color and intensity; of the windows, doors, light fixtures, fireplaces, and other possible natural sources of light.

The set, we shall say, is an interior. He begins with general illumination. He plans to use footlights and borders. He knows that the footlights must not be as strong as the borders, other-

wise they will cast shadows on the back wall and make unnatural high-lights and shadows on the faces of the actors. He keeps the intensity of the foots and borders down because he has learned that the acting areas are the points for high-lights, not the walls; and he knows further that brightly lighted walls tire and annoy an audience.

This general illumination from foots and borders will be flat and will show no depth. There are jogs and irregularities in the set, but these will not stand out. He considers his possible light sources (for his light must seem to be motivated) and he decides to use several flood and strip lights to cast some shadows here and there in the room. These shadows will give the room depth and third dimension, interest and variety, which it would have lacked before. He also thinks of what he can do to throw the upper part of the walls in shadow. .

He turns to his openings and considers how he shall light them. As he plans for his upstage lighting, he knows that the light outside his doors and windows must not be as strong as the downstage lights, otherwise he will destroy all illusion of distance. He also thinks of the direction of his light outside the openings.

Lighting his sky will, perhaps, be a problem. The sky must be light, yet a bright sky just back of an important acting area will tend to kill the action and throw it into silhouette. The problem of sky lighting may sometimes be lessened if the designer, when planning the set, keeps in mind how this area can be lighted; the problem is also easier if the drop is painted a light gray blue. If feasible, the electrician will probably plan to light the sky in the conventional way: a row of strip lights, placed on the floor, at least three feet in front of the drop.

Now he thinks of his primary acting areas. They will be, in this play, three in number: one downstage left of center, one center, a third upstage right of center. For each of these areas he decides to use two spotlights, placed on the light bridge or on the batten above the first border; the lights will form an arc of about forty-five degrees and will cross at the acting areas. He places

the stronger of each pair of lights on the side of the stage from which his natural source of light is supposed to come. He determines tentatively the color and intensity of the lights; if he is in doubt about these qualities, he will wait until the first dress rehearsal when he can see the actors in costumes and make-up.

· He has learned (from the play or the director) that he has two secondary acting areas to think about: one in a doorway rear left, the other a wall space at rear right. At a point in the play, an important piece of action takes place in this doorway. At another point, an actor must play directly against this right rear wall which is dimly illuminated.

In his plan, he directs a spotlight upon the doorway left, but keeps it down; and he directs a flood light against the wall right, but keeps it down. He cues in his light plot when these pieces of action are to come; just before the scene at the door he will take up his spotlight very slowly, at the same time taking down the two spots at left center; when the action is completed, he will dim down to his original lighting. He uses the same plan for lighting his right rear wall. He knows that he can make his shifts so gradually that the audience will not be aware of the changes in lighting.

At another point in the act, a storm gathers outside. Now his impulse may be to use a projection machine and throw some dark moving clouds on the sky drop which can be seen outside the big window; but he curbs this impulse, realizing that this effect may divert attention from the play. Instead, he decides to dim his lights, first upon the sky, next in the room, at which point the prop man will roll a bowling ball across the floor to simulate distant thunder; for he knows that these things will suggest a gathering storm to the audience without distracting from the play.

As the electrician works out his plan for lighting, he makes notations for his light plot. Then the light plot, with all light cues, is made. Then he assigns his operators to various units, goes through the plot, and is ready to test his lighting on the first night of dress rehearsal.

LIGHTING SUGGESTIONS

It is not difficult to suggest the time of day and its changes through direction, intensity, and color of lights: a strong, white or straw, overhead light for midday; a less intense, amber light slanting across stage for late afternoon, and so on. The electrician should not indulge in this trick when it is unnecessary to the action of the play and might attract attention to itself.

The electrician should not obey the impulse to show lights being turned on in buildings in the middle distance. An audience enjoys this childish experience of seeing the lights go on, but they forget about the play while watching them.

A spotlight throws a strong light and its circle is sharply defined against the darker background. This sharp edge may be softened by making a cardboard frame, with a circle of notches, each about an inch long, and projecting towards the center. This frame is placed inside the light frame, over the gelatin. A piece of frosted gelatin, oiled in the center, is also helpful in cutting down the sharp edge.
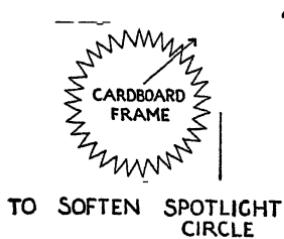
TO SOFTEN SPOTLIGHT CIRCLE

Sometimes when a high-powered spot is used, there is too much spill of light outside the area to be illuminated. If a funnel, sixteen to twenty inches long, made from stovepipe or tin in the form of a cylinder and painted black inside and out, is fastened to the spotlight at the color frame holder, the spill is prevented.

It is a sure sign of inexperienced lighting when an actor casts a shadow on the sky drop.

Light units should be placed high outside openings so that the shadows of the actors will fall on the floor rather than on the walls of the set.

A light should never be exposed on the stage; it will inevitably divert the attention of the audience from the action. This applies to an electric bulb, a kerosene lamp, even a candle. In most cases the light can be fitted with a shade or shield on the side towards the audience.

Lamps in fixtures on the stage should be frosted and of low wattage. They are used for appearance only and not for actual illumination of the set. A spotlight or flood light, properly directed, provides the actual lighting.

Some present-day floor and stand lamps throw the light upward. When these are used, a smaller lamp is screwed into the socket and the lamp is masked at the top.

The lamps on the stage which seem to provide the illumination, and the spots off stage which actually provide it, should be attached to the same dimmer.

An actor should be warned not to make a quick jab at a fake light switch, but to take time in order that the operator at the control board may synchronize his operation with the actor's action.

There should be balance and emphasis in illumination just as there is balance and emphasis in the rest of the design.

We have said that several demands are made on the scene designer: demands of composition, of the audience and actors, and of the play itself. The same demands are made on the electrician. Composition demands harmonious colors and a satisfactory design of light and shadow; actors and audience demand visibility; and the play demands that in intensity and color its mood shall be preserved.

28

COSTUMING THE PLAY

COSTUMING a play may be an involved and expensive project or a simple and inexpensive adventure. In a measure it is determined by the play; in far greater measure it is determined by the skill of the costumer. Hundreds of dollars may be spent in costuming *Hamlet*, but we have seen it done with complete satisfaction for sixty dollars. Acceptable costuming can be managed on a small budget, but never without some skill and a great deal of time; the less money and skill, the more time. The skill, however, need not be that of a trained worker; it is possessed by many people and only discovered when they have the courage to attempt a job that attracts them.

No part of the produced play is unimportant, and it is often only as successful as its weakest part. An otherwise fine production can be spoiled by inadequate or wrong costuming. The demands which the play makes upon the costumer may be simple and few, but they are exacting and imperative. Far too often, costuming the amateur play is an afterthought, left to anyone who is willing to assume the thankless task, or to the judgment and whims of the cast. The most that can be hoped for from such lack of judicious planning is that, by some happy accident, the costumes will not be too bad.

On the other hand, if the work is undertaken by someone with skill and knowledge of the needs and possibilities presented by the problem, the play may be immeasurably strengthened, its mood and objective clarified, its actors definitely assisted in portraying character.

Who Shall Costume the Play?

Who shall costume the play? Since the actors are a definite part of the stage design, the director and technical director should have the first and last words on the subject of costumes. Certainly the costuming should be done by someone who works with, and is advised by, the director. If a trained costumer is a part of the staff, she begins a study of the play as soon as it is chosen, she consults with the technical director, makes sketches for the costumes, selects materials and estimates costs, and presents her plans to the director. With him she makes revisions of these plans if necessary, and begins the actual work of making the costumes if they are to be made, or begins her canvas of costuming houses in person or by mail if the costumes are to be rented.

If the play must be costumed by a willing worker with ambition but with no training, a greater burden falls upon the director. It is he who makes the designs, determines the colors, directs the "costumer," and hopes for the best. If the worker is actually a worker, the director's hopes may be realized to a degree surprising to himself and pleasing to the audience; and he may soon find that he has a dependable costumer on the staff.

It is obvious that the amateur costumer's first gesture must be one of self-education. Usually her education must become adequate in a very limited time. Because that is so, she must have access to information on every phase of her work, information which is not theoretical but the result of experience, and information which is not too detailed to be grasped and put to work in a limited space of time.

Rented or Homemade Costumes

Two courses are open to the costumer: costumes may be rented or they may be made. Each plan presents advantages and disadvantages. Usually the choice is determined by three things: the budget, the experience of the costumer, and whether or not it is desirable to give students an opportunity to gain knowledge and experience in the art of costuming. Often what should be the chief

consideration—which method makes for the finest production—
is overlooked because of the necessities of the situation.

If classes in costume are associated with the theater, the choice,
of course, is determined: costumes are made. But if the costumer
is free to make her choice she will find that, in general, it costs
more in money to rent costumes, and infinitely more in time, skill,
and patience to make them. Again, in general, the results will be
more satisfactory if the costumes are tailor-made for the play and
the individual actors. Exceptions can be made of mail and armor
for men and of costumes for period or other plays which demand
very elaborate costumes. The beginning costumer finds such cos-
tumes difficult to make, the materials run into money even with
careful shopping, and she usually needs more time than she has
between the selection of the play and the first dress rehearsals.

If the problem is to be solved by reliance upon a costume house,
how is the right house to be found? Many costume houses are as
amateurish as the most amateur costumer and in no wise as sincere.
How is one to decide where to place an order?

One may always profit by the experience of others and avoid
some of the beginner's mistakes. If you have several firms bid for
your order, be doubtful of the offer that falls far below the others;
it may save you money at the expense of your play. Beware of the
costumer who says that he has not quite what you want in period
and color, but knows that he can "fix you up." (He probably
will!) Unless you know your house, put no dependence on the
promise that, although what you want will be in use the week you
want it, "it will get to you on time"; it may arrive the day of your
play direct from the other engagement, bedraggled and all wrong
as to sizes. It is well to avoid costumers who specialize in pageants
and masquerade parties.

The costumer who definitely caters to the professional theater
may charge more, but he has a finer selection, is accustomed to
taking the theater seriously, will give you what you ask for, or
tell you he cannot. If he offers substitutes, they can be trusted;
if he makes suggestions, they may have value. Usually he can be
depended upon for clean costumes, properly sized. Unfortunately

the prices asked by such houses are high and their distance from many of the school theaters means higher transportation charges.

There are also costume firms with professional standards who do not provide costumes for Broadway productions. When a costumer refuses to tell you what he can do for you until he has read your play, you can feel fairly sure that you have found the house you seek. Give him your best cooperation. Send him a copy of the play, designs of the sets, any costume design you have made (with notes about unusual sizes and physical peculiarities of your actors). Ask for detailed descriptions and estimates to insure both the costumer and yourself against misunderstandings.

Do not wait until a week before the play to do this. Try to find your costumes as soon as the play is chosen. Send measurements as soon as you are sure of the cast. Do not forget that you, as well as the costumer, are on trial. If you give the costumer all possible information and assistance, if you give his costumes the care you would give a new wardrobe of your own, and if you send them back promptly and in good condition, the costumer will respect you as a theater worker and will wish to please you.

It is advantageous to cultivate the good will of two firms, if they can be found; then if you order Colonial costumes from one, and in a later play want French Revolution costumes, you can order from the other and so guard against duplication. You cannot hope to find new and different costumes in the same stock year after year, but you can avoid repetitions within the reasonable memory of your audience.

The advantages of making costumes outweigh the advantages of renting them, if the play is not made to suffer from unimaginative design, wrong color, shoddy material, and careless workmanship. After a workshop is equipped, the cost of making costumes is, or can be, less than the cost of renting. The customary rental for a good costume for one performance is from $3 to $7; for a second performance, half the price of the first. With care, a costume which adequately serves the same purpose can be made for from $1.50 to $4. Moreover, there is the economy which results from the re-use of the materials, or of the costumes them-

selves; and not infrequently the costumes may be rented to other groups to swell the costume budget.

The tailor-made costume has an inestimable advantage for the actor. It can be perfect in fit, adjusted to the individual actor's comfort, and, if the costumer begins in time, may be available for many rehearsals, thus eliminating any clothes consciousness in the first presentation of the play.

The director, too, enjoys advantages if the costumes are made by a member of his staff. He can be sure that errors in design and color will not mar the play; he can be sure that he will have his costumes in plenty of time.

Making the Costumes

When the school costumer undertakes the making of costumes for a play rather than renting them, she becomes a creator as well as a business woman; she can contribute her share to the creation of the acted play. She can also free herself from certain worries she must have if the costumes are rented; if for some reason the scenic scheme is changed, lighting altered, or an actor falls ill and another two sizes smaller is substituted, she can make alterations before that tense hour on the day of dress rehearsal when rented costumes are unpacked.

WORKROOM AND EQUIPMENT

If the costumes are to be made by a member of the theater staff or by student assistants, a workroom and simple equipment are needed. A room as near the theater as possible should be secured for a workroom. It must be well lighted by day and wired for good lighting at night. This wiring should include several convenient outlets for irons and an electric machine.

Equipment includes an electric sewing machine (a rented or secondhand machine will do), an electric iron and ironing board, a cutting table large enough to permit the laying out of a complete pattern, and a dress form (an old adjustable form will serve). If there is room for it, a wardrobe should be built. Deep drawers

and sliding hanger rods are luxuries the costumer will appreciate, and a full-length mirror is a great joy to both costumer and actors.

In this simply equipped workroom, the costumer may begin her work hopefully. It is unfair to ask anyone to attempt the costuming of a play in a home where the costumer must be hostess and housekeeper as well as costumer; where much extra work is entailed because the workroom must be picked up after each sewing bout; where the costumer's time and energy are dissipated making trips to the theater to try costumes under stage conditions of light and scenery. Actors suffer the same loss of time making trips to the costumer. A room, adequately equipped and if possible in the same building with the theater, is most desirable.

PRELIMINARY PREPARATION

The costumer's work begins the moment the play is chosen. She begins by studying the play; she makes any needed research; then she gives her imagination free rein. As soon as the designer and director are ready, she goes into conference with them. She gets copies in color of the design for the sets; she learns what she can about the lighting.

She must, too, be given a budget; she must know how much she can spend.

She is now ready to set to work on her designs. Before she does, we must warn her that she had better check more than once on color schemes and lighting. Directors and their assistants have a way of changing their minds about such matters without informing the costumer. We have never known the sets or lighting to be changed to suit the costumer; it is always the other way around.

THE DESIGN

As the play has been the director's, technical director's, and electrician's guide, so is it the costumer's guide. Some guidance is derived from the type of play as well as from its specific mood and period. Comedies, farces, and melodramas usually call for more frothy designs, brighter colors, and lighter materials than dramas

and tragedies. High comedy calls for better line, finer materials, and more careful color selection than broad comedy or melodrama. Line is always important in tragedy and both color and fabric should have "weight." These are general suggestions which may be modified by the particular demands of the play.

The most baffling problem of the amateur costumer is devising the design which meets the requirements of the play. Too often the problem must be approached by someone lacking training in this field; for it must be borne in mind that designing for the theater is a field quite apart from the fields treated in the courses in design in our college and university art departments. Let us start this brief study with a problem in design and its solution.

Let us suppose that an ambitious director has decided to produce Brieux' *False Gods* or Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra*. The costumer becomes familiar with the play. She then familiarizes herself with Egyptian costume. She will find many good costume books and histories of Egypt which will provide all necessary information. Reference to files of theater magazines to see what other designers have done in costuming Egyptian characters will stimulate her imagination.

Now she asks herself: "What will be the reaction of my audience to Egyptian costume? How will the girls of the cast look in the scant attire of the Egyptian woman? What of the bony arms and spindly legs of the young men?" As she asks such questions, she sees clearly a necessity for modifications in authentic Egyptian costume. Fortunately, very few people in any audience know much about historical costume; and they are satisfied if they recognize a few conventional features. After that, they ask only that the costumes shall be appropriate and pleasing in color and in fit.

So the costume designer selects the characterizing elements of Egyptian design and applies them to simple foundations. She need not hesitate to put an ankle-length garment on a tall thin boy, or to add sleeves to the costume, provided she appends the conventional apron belt and constructs for him a convincing Egyptian headdress. So the round collar, generously proportioned, and the

belt made very wide, will suggest an Egyptian costume for women which is sufficiently modest to please the critical. She keeps her design simple, with definite emphasis on one or two elements. She will add to this design strong colors and bold stripes, perhaps black and white, to further capture the Egyptian mood.

Monotony is as deadening in costume as in movements or in reading lines. So the costumer strives for variety. Color helps to differentiate costumes, but the difference must appear in the lines as well. Here again, emphasis may remain on certain elements, but the elements themselves may vary in size, direction of line, even shape.

In most historical plays, caste imposes variety. In general, as the rank lowers, the design becomes more simple, the fabric coarser and more scant, and the colors duller. Sometimes, with a little experimentation, variety and sufficient authenticity can be secured for the peasant type of character, in the Egyptian plays we are considering, by the clever manipulation of a single piece of cloth in which holes for arms and head are cut; or the piece of cloth may be tied on one or both shoulders, and if it suits the design, a strip of cloth tied about the waist. Mob costumes for all sorts of plays can be thus easily designed after a little experience. Later we will have something to say about dressmaking versus costuming—dressmaking which requires much sewing, and costuming which requires only enough to secure the effect.

Even if the designer makes the costumes herself, she should have a drawing, however crude, for each costume. She may make half a dozen before she is pleased with one. These drawings should be complete in every detail, hats, shoes, gloves, ornaments, wraps. And each drawing should be made on a sheet of paper large enough to permit of many notes and figures. The proposed colors should be indicated or actually applied with colored pencil or water color. Possible fabrics are noted and yardage and cost estimated. As the project progresses, these items are checked and rechecked.

COLOR

How does the designer determine the color for each costume? She bears in mind that all costumes must harmonize with the scenery and lighting. They need not be identical with them; they may contrast with them and even clash with them if the play or character suggests it. An important point she must never forget is the color of lights to be used. She must know the effect of stage lights on different fabric colors. Failure to regard this effect may result in a tone or color entirely different from that produced by daylight or by the artificial light of the store. And she must remember that different fabrics may take the same light differently.

If possible, fabrics to be used for costumes should be chosen under the same lighting conditions as will be used on the stage during the play. This may be done by trying samples; but better still, where merchants are willing to cooperate, bolts of material may be brought to the theater and selection of colors and fabrics made from the auditorium.

If the electrician cannot set up his lights on the stage early enough, colors may be chosen by helpful color charts which are to be found in many books on costumes and lighting; in such a case the electrician must promise, on oath, not to change his mind about the lights. A general rule which is easily remembered is the one that colored light will not radically change its own color in fabric, and often intensifies it.

Costume colors should harmonize with the sets, remain true under the light conditions of the play, and agree with each other. These are simple but imperative demands made upon the costumer. If, in addition, she knows the values of colors, she may help establish the mood of the play and may assist the actor to a dramatic effectiveness impossible without a cleverly selected costume.

We have already spoken of the psychological aspect of color, of warm and cool colors, of color harmonies, of how gray in color takes away the life and hope which the more intense color possesses. What we have said of light color applies to the color of fabrics.

At times the costumer may go further in his application of the psychological aspects of color than the electrician may; for, in the costumer's case, the color is worn by a character and can become a visual expression of one of the qualities of the character. For instance, a green dress on a young character accents her youth; a blue dress on a modest character accents her modesty. Unless the costumer is sure that her color will have the intended meaning, she had better forget about meaning altogether and choose colors which are aesthetically right.

Let us give ourselves a color problem as we did in design, and suggest a course of action. We shall select colors for the designs we have made for an Egyptian play.

Research tells us that popular Egyptian colors were green, green blue, turquoise, red, orange, tan, and black and white; but just as we suggested that the costumer is not bound by strict authenticity in selecting designs, so she need not be bound in her selection of color. We will use authentic colors in sufficient quantity to give character to our costuming, and add any others not prohibited by the scenery, lighting, or mood of the play or character.

We must know the plans of the scene designer in order to know what authentic and harmonizing colors may be used in each act. We learn that act one will be in blue with orange accent; act two, terra cotta with an expanse of blue background and red accent; act three, gray white with green accent.

Act one prohibits only a few of our Egyptian colors; we will put only green and green blue on the doubtful list; shades of these colors will have to be selected with care. Act two sets more limitations. Now we will be wise to check off tan (it is never dramatically valuable anyway), and, if the horizon line is below the figure line, all blue that may merge with the background. Orange will be good or bad, depending on the tone of the terra cotta, and on whether or not it will be seen against the blue background. Act three will not prohibit the use of any of our colors.

With one or two general reminders, we are ready to decide upon what may be a wise choice of costume colors. Thought must

be taken for any costumes which play through all three acts: they must meet the demands of each act. Every costume must be challenged in its relation to the background. No costume should be so near the color of the background that it is not definitely outlined against it. Accent colors in scenery, if not too lavishly used, are good suggestions for costume colors.

So far so good, but still we may not make our color selection. We must know the proposed lighting conditions in which our costumes are to play. In order that our problem shall not become too complicated, we shall assume that the colors in our sets remain the same as we have indicated. Suppose that the specific illumination in act one is to be amber, in act two light blue is to dominate, and in act three some of the spotlights and flood lights are to be white, but one third of the playing space is to be flooded with a red light.

Now we have a new set of prohibitions. Considering act one, we cross off turquoise blue, for amber lights are never kind to blue. Also, it will turn our green to yellow green or muddy brown or some other undersirable color. White will lose its clear sharpness and become soft and creamy. Red and orange will be intensified. What of act two? Now we can expect blues to remain blue; that green will become blue green; tan, valueless; and red, magenta or violet. Orange becomes dull yellow or brown, black is blue black, and white takes on radiance. Act three looks very simple. Every costumer welcomes white light, for if she has selected her colors in daylight and not incandescent light, she knows her colors will be unchanged. But what of the reddish spotlight? Every costume that moves into this red area, must be tested by red light. Red light turns blue to violet or dull purple; makes green a red gray, and blue green a dull ugly color. Yellow, orange, and red will be intensified, and tan will gain in warmth.

The problem we have considered is not so much an actual problem as it is an attempt to make clear the necessity for great care in selecting costume colors, and to suggest a procedure for guarding against mistakes. In most instances, the costumer will have more cooperation from the electrician than she has had in this case.

After colors have been tested by scenic and lighting conditions, the costumer consults the director for assistance in determining what colors are most helpful to the play and characters. She will not feel obliged to incorporate these suggestions in her color plans if they cannot be reconciled with the requirements made by scenery and lights, for, even before they attempt to express character, costume colors must harmonize with scenery, lights, and with each other.

FABRICS

When color selections have been made, the costumer faces the task of finding these desired colors in fabrics cheap enough to come within her budget. This is not an easy task. Good colors do not often come in cheap materials. She may find that in order to have the right color in inexpensive fabrics she must do her own dyeing.

Because it means a great deal less work if fabrics can be purchased in the desired colors, she shops around. She goes to the low-priced stores. She pores over mail-order catalogues, she writes to some good firm, that specializes in stage costume fabrics, for their sample book and price list.

In buying fabrics for color, the costumer must remember that fabrics, too, have their connotation. Silks, velvets, laces, gold and silver cloth, brocades, are for the rich and the important characters. Coarse fabrics, rough textures, dull finishes are for the peasants, the poor, the neglected. Always the fabrics are chosen for their *theater* value and not for their *clothes* value. What looks right on the counter may look wrong on the stage when viewed from the auditorium. This is particularly true of figured materials. Small, pretty figures are valueless in stage fabrics. Just as designs and colors are chosen for their sharpness and carrying quality, so fabrics are chosen for positive characteristics. If the costume is to be draped, the material must be soft enough to fall in folds when picked up lightly. If severe effects are wanted, the material must be heavy enough to hold stiff and dignified lines. These effects, and all others, must be apparent from the back rows of the theater.

Plain fabrics can usually be more effectively manipulated than figured materials. These can be found in calico, cotton suiting, cotton flannel, burlap, crêpe, and toweling, to name some of the lower-priced materials.

If one can pay more, there are sateen, many rayon materials (always remembering that cheap rayon presents difficulties for the seamstress), flannel, velveteen, and a great variety of useful materials offered by firms catering to professional costumers. Much of this material is not too expensive for a well-planned budget. These houses are a safe source for figured fabrics, since they have been designed definitely for the stage.

The determined shopper leaves no possible source unexplored. Sometimes a rayon bedspread provides just the right brocade, or ten-cent-store oilcloth the right material either for an applied design or for whole costumes for fantastic or comedy characters. The curtain goods department may have the sought-for piece of material. Often, however, when the last source has been explored, the costumer finds she must dye some materials or give up her carefully made designs. If she is a person of some patience, if she has an eye for color, and a love for adventure, she does not hesitate; she dyes.

DYEING

She will need two large dye pots, and we hope she can use them where a few splashes of dye will not matter. When buying dyes, she will select from a good line of commercial dyes rather than from the tinting varieties, though these ten-cent-store dyes serve very well in an emergency. Commercial dyes are not hard to buy, not hard to handle, and are usually true and lasting. Some drug stores carry these colors with complete directions; almost every wholesale drug firm carries a complete line. The process of dyeing is not difficult, and the results are satisfactory if the directions are carefully followed. It is always well to experiment with strips of the material to be used; particularly is it well to do this if over-dyeing or dyeing a second time is to be done. Second dyeing is al-

ways more effective than mixing the colors before the fabrics are dipped.

For example, if you desire a green blue, you dye your test strip green, then re-dye it in blue.

Experiment until you have the desired intensity. Dyeing is almost the only way to secure a mono-color scheme. Dip for the strongest color first, and, using the same bath, keep on dipping other pieces until you have the lighter shades you wish. In this way you will be sure of having the same color in a variety of shades.

Interesting color effects are obtained by tying and dyeing. The material may be dipped, then tied with cord at regular or irregular intervals, and dipped again. Or circles may be tied in the material between dips, or the material itself tied in knots. Experimentation will lead to many different effects.

Some materials take dye more satisfactorily than others and present fewer difficulties for the amateur dyer. At the top of the list of such materials is unbleached muslin, a close second is cotton flannel; some curtain materials, also, are easily dyed. These materials should be purchased in as wide widths as possible to facilitate cutting.

Materials may be dyed before they are cut or after. Dyeing after cutting seems the more economical way, but often the dyed leftover pieces are more useful than pieces of white material; they can be used in trimming other costumes. Moreover, if there is any shrinkage, the first method proves the wiser. And, if the estimated yardage jotted down on the paper when the designs were made is correct, the number of yards to be dyed for a costume is determined, and there will be only a negligible amount of scraps.

PAINTING

Trimming or accent colors can be very satisfactorily applied with show card paint which comes in a variety of colors, or with scenic colors, or radiator paint which comes in gold, silver, and

bronze. Oil paint is not so practicable; it is difficult to apply and dries slowly.

Where special designs are important, the design can be applied to plain material and the entire costume cut from this painted material. A stencil is useful for this work, but after a period of practice it can be done free-hand.

Nothing else is needed for this work but colors, a few inexpensive brushes, and a set of bold characterizing designs. Here again we emphasize the use of simple, sharp designs that will be dramatic to the last rows of seats. A few good colors and carefully selected lines tell the audience something; too many colors and lines are confusing.

CUTTING AND SEWING

The actual work of cutting and making the costumes must be under the supervision of the costume designer if she does not, as is often the case, do most of the work herself. If volunteer or student help does the cutting and sewing, the work should be under constant supervision. The designer should do all fitting and draping until some helper has proved adaptability for this exacting work; and when patterns cannot be found or when they need modification, she will provide the cutting guides. It often pays to experiment with cheap material and make a costume which will serve as a pattern. For this experimentation, a dress form is a great help.

If there are no classes in costume and no student assistants, and if the budget provides for the hiring of some help, the designer should seek out a good-natured seamstress whose chief recommendation is her ability and complete willingness to take direction. Modistes and the best dressmakers in town seldom make successful costumer's assistants. They fail to grasp, in theory or practice, the difference between clothes and costumes; they sew for long wear and close observation not for effectiveness at a distance. But a modest seamstress, after acquiring some experience in costume making, often becomes an invaluable aid; she becomes

one of the play producing group; she often will not let the show down, even though it means long hours of night work or hurried last-minute alterations. No amount of volunteer help can lighten the costumer's load as can one such assistant.

Few thanks are ever given the costumer. Most outsiders seem to think that right costumes are plucked out of the thin air. When costumes are wrong, there is criticism, but when they are right they are accepted without comment. Perhaps this is as it should be. A successful play is the important thing; and the costumer must accept the silence of the public along with her co-workers, the electrician, stage manager, even the director. Her compensation is the knowledge that the play has been successful because of the intelligent contribution of each theater worker.

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Costume Rehearsals

Costume rehearsals are of two kinds: those conducted for the actors and those conducted for the costumer. Rehearsing the costumes is not the same thing as rehearsing the actors in the costumes.

Seeing a costume on an actor as that actor moves about the stage in his character is often a revelation to the costumer. Any costume which the designer doubts in any respect should be rehearsed; and, until the costumer is sufficiently experienced to trust herself, she should have a small doubt about all her work. Each costume, before it is finished, should be seen on the stage at a time when the costumer can move about the auditorium challenging it for line, color, and appropriateness.

The beginning costumer's worst mistakes usually occur in line. A good way to test a costume for line is to arrange the lights so that the costume is seen in silhouette. This test sometimes reveals that in an effort to save costs the whole figure looks stringy and restricted, and there is no grace or flow to the garment; or that the bouffant area is too high or too low for the particular fig-

ure; or that some peculiarity in the figure of the actor makes the sleeves, so right in the design, all wrong on the stage.

Costume rehearsals help the costumer to determine whether or not the fit and style of the costume permits the necessary freedom of action demanded by the character, and whether or not the actor is comfortable in his costume. The actor answers the last question; it is the one question about costumes on which he should have the final say. The costumer, because she knows that most amateur actors must be taught to wear all unfamiliar costumes, answers the first herself, assisted, of course, by the one who is to wear the garment.

Then there is the question of changing from one costume to another. The play cannot wait for costume changes. It may be that the costumer finds that a zipper must replace hooks and eyes, or that the costume must go on like a coat instead of over the head if a wig or headdress is worn.

Even an experienced designer sometimes discovers in these rehearsals that she has designed a costume for the actor and not for the *character* the actor is to portray; the costume is lovely for the girl who rehearses it, but the moment the girl becomes a character the designer feels an incongruity. The costume is one the character never would have chosen and is a serious handicap to the actor.

The hardest blow comes to the costumer when, after the first dress rehearsal, the electrician or technical director declares that he must change the lighting, and in consequence one or more of her best costumes loses its color, beauty, and value. This does not happen often, but it does happen. There should be a spirit of cooperation and a willingness to compromise on the part of the theater workers, but the cooperation and compromise is too frequently up to the costumer rather than the electrician or scene painter.

If any of these circumstances prevails, the costume must be remade or hung in the wardrobe and a new one constructed. This gives a reason why the costumer should have her costumes in readiness before the dress rehearsal; she may need the last two days for changing and remaking one or more of the costumes.

Rehearsing the Actors in the Costumes

If the play is a period play or demands unfamiliar costumes of any sort, the director should know the restrictions on gesture and movement such costumes will impose. By showing his actors pictures of clothes similar to those they are to wear in the play, and by admonishing them to think of themselves as wearing such clothes, he will prepare them for the dress rehearsals. The more complicated or unfamiliar the costumes, the earlier the costume rehearsals should come. If the actor has been able to create a strong, living character, the problem of wearing the costume will be minimized. The *character* will not feel awkward; to him the clothes are familiar and right.

It is not only period costumes, costumes of the twelfth or eighteenth centuries, which prove a problem to the actor. Many a girl finds a form-fitting dress with a train an embarrassing handicap if her generation wears full skirts for formal wear. Or it may be that the garments of an old person or of a character from some little-known walk of life makes the actor feel awkward. This is not serious. The director and costumer recognize these costume reactions and are patient with the actor until the awkwardness leaves him.

Usually with patience and help from the costumer, who knows how the costumes should be worn, even inexperienced actors can be taught to wear costumes convincingly. It takes as much rehearsing as the actor needs. This rehearsing should not be left to the dress rehearsal periods, but can be done at any time or place convenient for the actor.

The Costumer During the Performance

It would be pleasant if, when the costumer has designed, made, adjusted, and rehearsed costumes and actors, and has all the costumes in the assigned dressing rooms, the costumer could declare her work finished. In a professional theater her work is finished, but in the amateur theater it is not. Although she has instructed the actors thoroughly in the care of their costumes, they are

thoughtless and excited on the first night of the play; although the stage manager has charge of the stage on this night, she cannot depend on him in time of costume trouble. During the first performance she had better be back stage, supervising, inspecting, and ready to assist, and she may be certain that her assistance will be needed here and there.

Between performances she should make an inspection of the costumes. Actors always forget to tell anyone if a seam rips or some snaps are broken; and, in spite of repeated admonitions and pleas, she is likely to find that an actress has permitted a silk dress to slip from its hanger and lie in a heap on the dressing room floor.

Lastly, after the final performance the costumes should be checked back to the costumer; she should have them cleaned, and put away in the wardrobe.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR PERIOD COSTUMING

The following pages are intended as suggestions for the study of period costumes. For the inexperienced costumer they should simplify the matter of these more demanding costuming problems. They may be used as aids in designing, and in shopping for materials; they may also serve as guides when costumes are ordered from a professional costumer.

The lists of colors and fabrics are not exhaustive but may be accepted as reliable suggestions. The costumes pictured have been designed to show, in each case, elements easily identified as of their period; and it is hoped that they will lead the costumer to look for elements which she may rearrange in original designs. Not all of these elements need be used in each costume, and any element may be combined with less familiar elements which the imaginatively interested worker will find in her study of the period indicated by the play to be produced.

A consideration of the following pictures reveals that some are not so pleasing, so effective as others; that in some the costumed figure seems too short, or too thick, or not a well-balanced whole. This is because the figure upon which the costume is superimposed is identical in each picture. This should serve to emphasize the fact that an actor cannot wear all designs with equal effectiveness. Actors cannot always be chosen for the adaptability of their figures to the costumes demanded, but it is well to keep the costume problem in mind when casting a period play.

A study of the pictures should also serve to reaffirm our emphasis on the importance of the silhouette.

EGYPTIAN COSTUME

Characterizing elements: apron effects; fullness in the front; girdles with front drapery; round collars or yokes; head coverings.
Favored colors: yellow, orange, tan, green, turquoise, green blue, black, and white.
Adaptable materials: cheesecloth, muslin, awning cloth, suiting, plain percale, burlap, monk's cloth, denim.
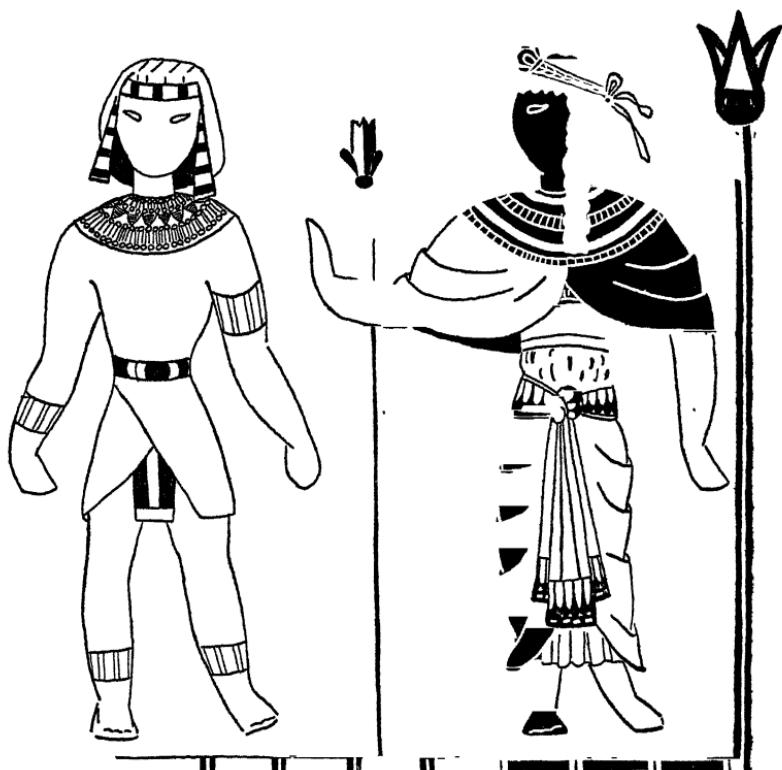
GREEK COSTUME

Characterizing elements: two garments (both unfitted); chiton, the undergarment, a tunic, square in shape; himation, the overgarment, a mantle, square in shape; girdles; headdresses; colored bands in conventional Greek designs.

Favored colors: soft colors, golden yellow, light blue, green, brown, purple.

Adaptable materials: sateen, muslin, cheesecloth, crêpe, cotton flannel, toweling, china silk, voile.
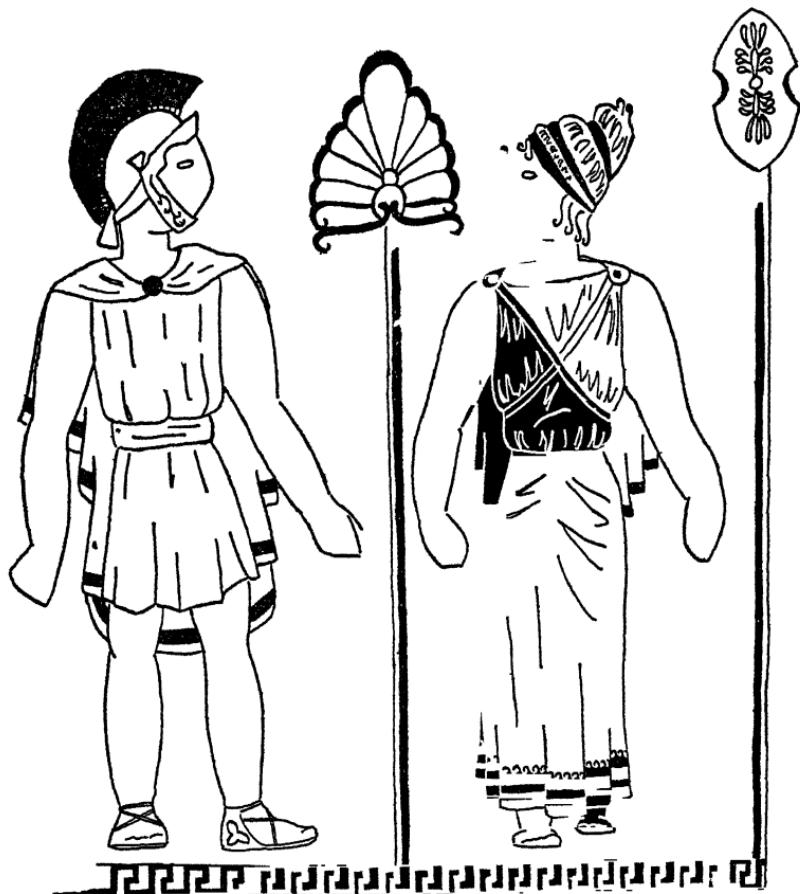
Roman Costume

The Roman costume was copied from the Greek, and, like the
Greek, men's and women's clothes were much alike.

Characterizing elements: two garments, tunic and toga, the toga
being like the himation, except for semicircular shape and absence
of corners or points; always a girdle; headdress. (Both Greeks
and Romans left the right arm free.)

Favored colors: gray, tan, purple, green, yellow, red, brown, blue,
white, black. (Roman colors denoted profession and rank.)

Adaptable materials: same as for Greek.

MEDIEVAL COSTUME

Characterizing elements: Women: hair in braids; sleeves important; wimples; tunics in early periods; later, fitted dresses; mantles. Men: hair loose, tunics; tights; mantles; pointed shoes.

Favored colors: strong brilliant shades of blue, green, red, yellow.

Adaptable materials: velveteen, corduroy, sateen, toweling, dyed muslin, cretonne, crêpe, cotton flannel.

Both sexes wore embroidery and jewelry. Classes were distinguished by costume.
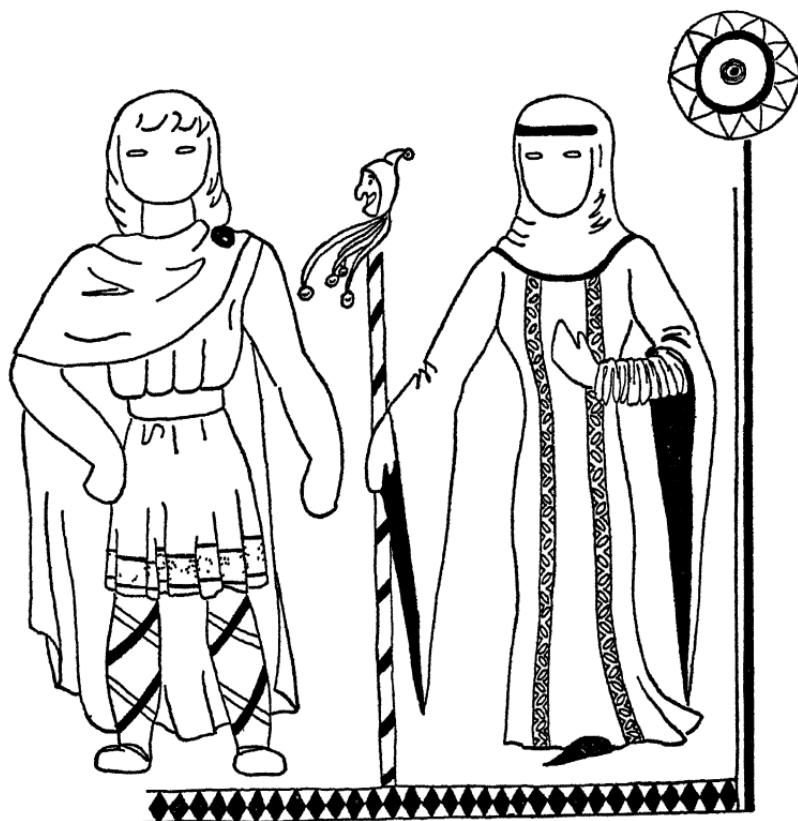
EARLY AMERICAN COSTUME

Characterizing elements: Women: full skirts; bonnets. Men: knee breeches, wide-brimmed hats; long hair.

Capes, wide collars, cuffs, and shoe buckles were worn by both sexes.

Favored colors: gray, brown, soft blue, rich red, dark green.

Adaptable materials: wool flannel, cotton flannel, velveteen, muslin, percale, leather cloth.
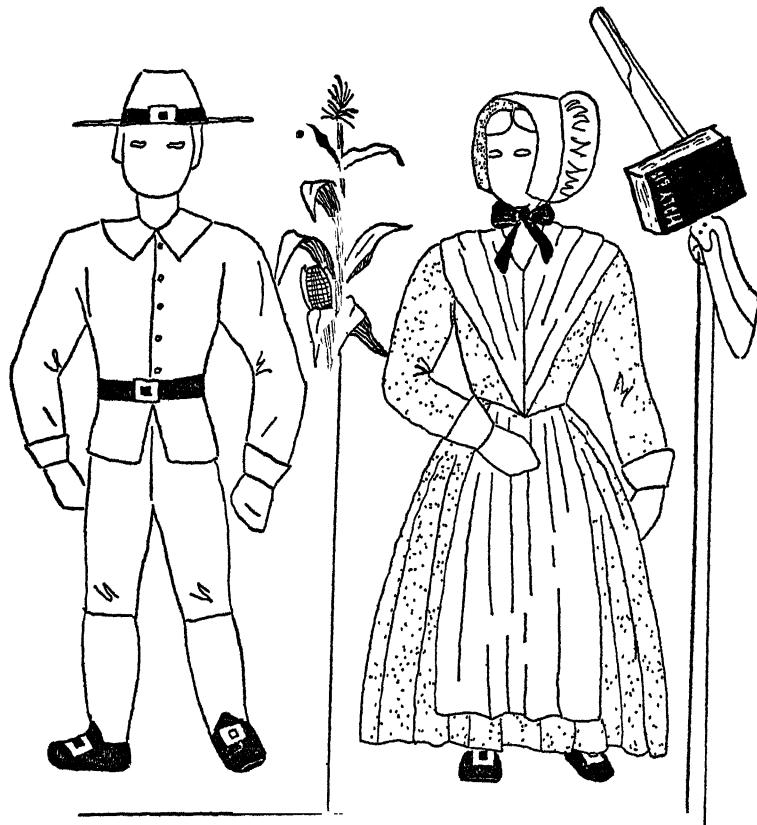
18TH-CENTURY AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN COSTUME

Characterizing elements: Women: pointed bodices; overdresses; full ·hooped skirts; elaborate coiffure. Men: long coats; knee breeches; lace frills; neckcloths; long vests; tricornered hats.

Favored colors: all colors were used and in combination; figured fabrics were much used.

Adaptable materials: sateen, cretonne, cotton flannel, cheap silks, painted rayon, curtain lace, rayon bedspreads, duveteen, quilted fabrics.

Costumes for both sexes were very rich and elaborate; both sexes wore powdered wigs.

Victorian and Civil War Costume

Characterizing elements: Women: full skirts; small waists; wide shoulders; hoops. Men: long tight trousers; high-waisted coats; short vests.

Favored colors: all colors were used; in general, figures were small.

Adaptable material: voile, calico, broadcloth, muslin, crêpe, sateen, print, flannel, lace.

Both sexes wore shawls and capes.

OTHER COSTUMES

Modern costumes (1890 to present): for modern costumes, consult the files of papers and magazines of the period.

National costumes: see books on costumes and consult files of the
· National Geographic Magazine.

Farce and comedy costumes: farce and comedy costumes are exaggerations of the dress of the period. The characterizing elements should be exaggerated. The extent of the exaggeration is determined by the play and the character.

Fantastic costumes: costumes for a fantasy should be the imaginative, creative problem of individual directors and costumers. Sources of inspiration may be found in books on costume, designs drawn by recognized stage designers, in files of the theater magazines, and among the illustrations in books of fairy tales.

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EFFECTS

From the very beginnings of acted drama, if we are to trust the records, audiences have loved "stage effects," and the property man or technical director (or whatever was his title in those far-off days) has loved devising them. Before the director appeared, perhaps even before the author, the stage effect man was devising sounds and sights for the primitive audiences of Europe and Asia. At certain periods of theatrical history—in Rome under the Empire and in western Europe during the days of the religious mystery plays—the effect man assumed a position of prominence equal to that of the actor.

Effects are usually of two kinds—those which are to be seen and those which are to be heard. (Other effects such as the effect of smell are not unknown; Belasco sprayed an auditorium with perfume and in Reinhardt's *The Miracle* incense was burned.) The problem of sound effects can be largely taken care of now by the talking machine and amplifier, together with records of every known sound. These are two common objections to the recorded sound: it is frequently difficult to cue in the sound for perfect timing, and unless expensive amplifying equipment is used the illusion is sometimes far from satisfactory. Records produced by several manufacturers sell from one dollar up. All stages, however, do not possess the equipment for recorded sounds and the technical director must rely on his own ingenuity for their production.

It is a challenge to devise one's own effects; and it is good sport, though often the effect is produced only through much trial and error and is found only when hope has all but vanished.

For presentation of *Winterset* a hurdy-gurdy or street organ is needed. An amateur group, producing the play, could find no hurdy-gurdy within a radius of several hundred miles. Accordion and piano records were tried and found useless. An old-fashioned music box was brought into the theater, but it was not right. Finally, a record of a piano solo was cut in a radio studio with light blocks of wood laid across the strings of the piano. The record (after two recordings to get the proper beat) was satisfactory; a fake hurdy-gurdy was constructed for stage use and all went well.

In the same play, the fall of sleet was simulated with Christmas snow which was sifted from a light bridge above stage and just back of the front curtain; the snow was swirled down towards the stage by means of concealed electric fans.

In another play, Totheroh's *Distant Drums*, the howl of a coyote was desired. A record was bought, but the howl in the record did not fit into the play: it was too continuous. One night during rehearsal the director was pleasantly surprised to hear what, from the auditorium, sounded like just the right coyote howling at just the right intervals. The howl was being made by a member of the cast some distance off stage.

Stage effects are often evoked from trial and error, from inspiration and desperation. The difficulty with any list of effects is that it never contains the exact effect wanted; and by the *exact* effect we mean not one completely realistic, but one which suggests something to the audience and makes it see or hear what is necessary for the drama. Nevertheless, a list of the conventional effects and the ways of making them is here appended, in the hope that it may prove suggestive to the imagination of the effect man.

Animal Calls. Almost any animal call can be found in records. It is surprising how many actors are good at some animal call or other. A director is often rewarded for his inquiry: "Can anyone in the cast or crew neigh like a horse?" by having the neigh come forth from the throat of some actor whom he had never suspected of such talent.

Band Marching. A marching band may be made convincing to an audience by having a small portable talking machine playing a

band record, plus a stage hand beating time, not in perfect tempo, on a real bass drum. The stage hand carrying the machine and the one beating the drum walk from some distance off stage towards the set, and off again.

Bells. Every theater should be equipped with two electric bells— one for the telephone bell, the other for the doorbell; and the two should not sound alike. An iron pipe, hanging free and struck with a padded stick or hammer, suggests the tone of a bell.

Bird Calls. The ordinary bird whistle, a toy which can be purchased at a ten cent store, may be used, though it will probably sound like a ten-cent-store whistle. Jazz band musicians sometimes have bird calls. And remember some actor may be able to caw like a crow or chirp like a sparrow.

Blood. Glycerin mixed with crimson dry color will give the effect of blood or a bloody wound.

Champagne. Use a bottle partly filled with ginger ale, tightly corked, and shaken slightly before the cork is removed. It is not necessary to use liquids unless they are seen by the audience. When they are used, their color should be tested under the lights.

Clock Striking. Striking a triangle or a high-pitched gong gives an imitation of a clock striking. An iron pipe, struck with a padded stick, makes an acceptable clock chime.

Crash. In the good old days every theater had among its effects a crash box. This was a box, about sixteen by sixteen inches, partly filled with pieces of glass. When a crash was needed, the box was dropped to the floor. The crash box is still occasionally usable. Or, laths nailed upright in a row and broken with a broad swing of a hammer make a good crash.

Dust. To give clothes a dusty appearance, use fuller's earth which can be purchased at a drug store.

Feet Marching. Train several stage hands to mark time together. The sound of the footsteps may be varied by changing the surface marched upon: a padded platform, sand, broken twigs, give different effects. Something of the effect may be obtained with a bass drum and a number of padded drumsticks. The drum is struck in marching tempo.

Fireplace Fires. The appearance of a fireplace glare is contrived by a concealed orange (not red) light bulb, or by orange gelatin over a clear lamp.

Live coals are suggested by pieces of red and orange gelatin, placed between the logs or coals, and lighted from behind.

Fireplace smoke which is effective and not dangerous may be made from firecracker punk, joss sticks, or incense.

Flames may be simulated by narrow, pointed strips of red and orange silk, attached to the logs, and blown upward by a small concealed electric fan.

Cooking in a fireplace or on a stove may be accomplished by a hidden electric stove. Cooking, however, had better be faked. Actual cooking distracts the interest of the audience from the play to the process of cooking. In a production of *Juno and the Paycock* the point which seemed to impress the play reviewer most was that sausages were actually cooked on the stage! And the second night the audience seemed more impressed with the cooking of Captain Boyle than with anything else. The actor got a round of applause for his cooking.

To light a paper in a fireplace, stick the end of the paper in the fireplace and have a stage hand light it from behind with a match or taper.

Hoof Beats. The old stand-by is a coconut, sawed in halves; the halves are struck together or against the stage floor in proper cadence. This gives the sound of horses' hoofs on pavement. For the sound on a dirt road, strike the coconuts against a leather cushion or some padded surface.

Lightning. Lightning can be most simply manipulated from the control board by switching the lights off and on quickly. This is accompanied by a ripping sound, made by tearing an old piece of muslin quickly, and is followed by a clap or roll of thunder.

MOON BOX

Moon. A moon box can be made by constructing a box frame of $1'' \times 3''$ lumber, two feet long by sixteen inches wide. In one inside corner of the frame a light socket is made fast and a
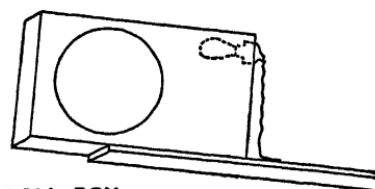
clear lamp screwed in. One side of the box is covered completely with composition board. The other side is covered with the board except for a round opening, fourteen inches in diameter, near the end opposite the light. The inside surface of the box, below this opening, is painted a blend of white, cream, and yellow. The outside of the box is painted black. When the light is turned on, the effect from a distance is very moonlike. The box may be raised by hand or by a mechanism in the flies.

Motor. The sound of a motor *may* be made by turning on a vacuum cleaner; it is better, however, to use a motorcycle motor. With practice, the roll of a snare drum is effective.

Rain. When it is necessary for rain to fall on the stage, an iron pipe, perforated with a number of small holes and attached by a hose to a tank or a faucet, is suspended above the stage. Not much water needs to fall to give the effect of rain. The actors, moving behind the curtain of rain, seem to be walking in it. The water may fall on layers of cloth which absorb it, or into a shallow trough from which it is carried off stage.

Water on wool or cotton clothes does not make them appear wet; glycerin gives the effect desired, but it is very hard on the clothes.

The sound of rain is produced in various ways. Small gravel rocked back and forth in a box gives the sound; dried peas running down a chute of stiff paper and falling into a pail may be used; peas and shot rolled around on a bass drumhead suggest the swish and fall of rain; a block of wood covered with sandpaper and rubbed against the back of a flat with a circular motion gives the sound of wind blowing rain against a wall. This sandpaper, if rubbed smoothly and continuously on the flat, suggests a faucet of running water.

Sand. When sand must be blown about on the stage, use cut brown paper or grapenuts or something which can be blown by an electric fan, and which is not too hard to sweep up.

Sea. The sound of the sea may be suggested by making a framework from $1'' \times 3''$ lumber, sixteen inches wide by eight feet long; covering one side with muslin (painted muslin is better than new); pouring in a quart of dried peas or beans; covering

the top of the frame tightly with muslin; and rolling the peas rapidly or slowly from end to end of the frame.

Shots. The sound of rifle shots or the rat-tat-tat of machine guns can be made by whipping the back of a flat or a leather-covered chair with a switch.

One sharp shot may be made by a board held down by the foot at one end, while the other end is raised and slapped against the floor. If the first board does not give the effect desired, try another board of different length and thickness.

The booming of a distant cannon is made by striking a bass drum.

A loud explosion is made by firing a shotgun, loaded with blanks, into a large metal ash or garbage can.

Slam. The sound of a slam, such as an off stage door, is made by slamming shut the top of a chest, or by taking a three-foot piece of 1″ × 3″ lumber (or wider), standing on one end of it, raising the other, and dropping the raised end to the floor.

Smoke. Incense makes good smoke and it is not dangerous. If a greater volume of smoke is needed, smoke pots may be purchased from manufacturers of fireworks.

Snow. Falling snow is generally simulated by using small pieces of white paper which are allowed to sift down to the stage. White confetti can be used. The paper is placed in a shallow box, one side of which is covered with several layers of chicken netting. The box is hung above the stage and is arranged with a rope and pulley so it can be tilted. As the box is tilted, the paper falls through the netting. An electric fan concealed at one side will toss the snow about; a fan on each side will give the snow a whirling motion.

For drifted snow, such as drifts outside a window or in tree branches, cotton batting may be used.

Snow on the ground may be suggested with coarse salt.

When snow on the clothes is necessary, salt may be used, in this case slightly dampened.

Sparks. Sparks from a stove or fire may be simulated by red and orange confetti blown about by a concealed electric fan.

Stars. The effect of stars twinkling in the sky is gained by cutting small holes of different sizes in a drop and placing lights behind the drop.

Steam. Pieces of dry ice placed in a teakettle or other receptacle will give the effect of steam. Be careful not to use too much ice or the trick will be discovered.

Thunder. A sharp clap of thunder is made by hanging upright a piece of galvanized tin or sheet iron, twenty inches by three or four feet, which is attached to a batten. The lower edge of the tin may have a handle attached to it so that the tin may be jerked and shaken to produce the clap. A. E. Krows in *Equipment for Stage Production* tells that the thunder sheet was invented by an English theatrical critic in 1708. He looked upon the invention as his own; but others began using it and he complained that they were "stealing his thunder." From this the expression has come into our common speech.

The roll or rumble of thunder is made by rolling a bowling ball or a heavy dumb-bell along the floor.

Train. The sound of a train starting is still made as it was in the old melodrama days. Two wooden blocks are covered with sandpaper. As they are rubbed together, the sound is that of escaping steam; as they are rubbed more rapidly the train gets under way. A bell or a whistle adds to the effect.

Underbrush. To simulate the sound of walking through underbrush or over débris, fill a gunnysack with pieces of heavy paper, twigs, and pieces of flake glue, and walk up and down on it.

WIND MACHINE

Wind. For the appearance of wind, there must be something such as a curtain or flag for the wind to blow. Conceal a large electric fan near the object and turn it on.

The sound of wind is made by a wind machine, another invention dating back to the eighteenth century. Two wooden disks are
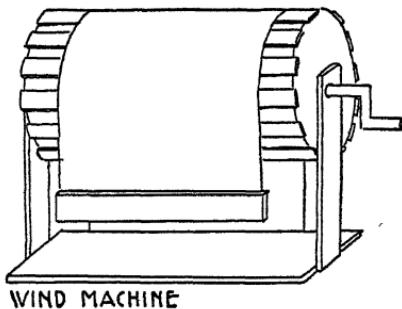
made, perhaps sixteen to twenty inches in diameter; these disks are placed on an axle; slats with one-inch spaces between them are nailed from disk to disk, making an openwork cylinder; a crank is attached to the axle, running through the cylinder, and the cylinder is mounted on a framework. A piece of canvas nailed to one edge of this frame is thrown over the cylinder and weighted on the free side. As the crank is turned, the cylinder revolves and the friction of the canvas on the slats produces the sound of wind. The wind rises as the cylinder is revolved more rapidly.

The sound of wind can also be made by taking two disks, covering them with silk, and rubbing them together.

31

THE STAGE MANAGER AND HIS CREW

IN THE long and complex process of production, the last, but not the least, figure to appear and take over a share of the responsibility is the stage manager. Possibly he is a new figure, one whom we have not met before, but more likely he is our old acquaintance the technical director, or even the director himself who now assumes new duties and responsibilities.

The Stage Manager's Duties

The necessity for a stage manager is surely clear by now. Several groups have been working separately on the play: groups of actors, carpenters, painters, electricians, property men, costumers. Now the work of these several groups has to be assembled on the stage and made to fit together; and somebody has to superintend the fitting.

The stage manager's duties, then, are obvious. He takes complete charge of the stage and sees that the play, from first to last curtain, moves swiftly and in proper order.

From the first dress rehearsal to the fall of the curtain on the last night, the stage manager is a very important person. As we have said earlier in the book, he should be reliable, efficient, and if possible, experienced. He has read the play, conferred with the director, and attended an occasional rehearsal. He must now become the foreman of a crew of workers, for a number of people with special duties will have to assist him in his job.

THE SCENERY CAPTAIN

For one thing, the scenery has to be set in place and taken down. In the professional theater this work is in charge of the chief carpenter. The stage manager may give his scenery boss any title he chooses: scenery captain, or manager, or master. In the professional theater the stage carpenter's helpers are divided into two groups: the loft men who work in the loft and raise and lower the drops, and the grips who remain on the floor and move the flats into place. Whether or not there is this division is unimportant; whether a scenery captain or the stage manager assumes the duties of scenery boss is unimportant; it is important, however, that some person shall be in charge of the scenery.

THE HEAD ELECTRICIAN

In many amateur plays the entire electrical crew consists of one man who stands at the control board and occasionally throws a switch; but, whether there is a necessity for one man or many, somebody responsible to the stage manager should be in charge of lighting operations. (We are distinguishing here between the electrician who has designed the lighting and the electrician who is to work the play.) The operating electrician should be dependable, ingenious, not easily excited. When a stage electrician loses his head, the result is often disastrous. Some kinds of mistakes can be covered up, but not a lighting mistake. If an actor on stage flips an imaginary switch to darken the room, and the lights go out thirty seconds later, the entire audience knows what has happened and titters. If the electrician forgets to turn off a light back stage and the light reveals the shadow of a stage hand arranging properties, the audience turns its attention away from the play to the shadow. A good electrician should be the sort of person who could have a murder committed just behind him and go about his routine work of dimming lights and throwing switches as if nothing out of the ordinary were happening.

THE PROPERTY MAN

Most plays call for both set props and hand props, and these

range in number from a dozen to several hundred. So, somebody has to be in charge of the properties.

The property man does not need any special talents but, like other theater workers, he should be dependable. Since properties are sometimes in charge of a committee rather than one person, we might take this opportunity to say a word about turning over this responsibility to a committee.

Our advice is: do not do it because it is seldom satisfactory. If a director or stage manager appoints a committee of three people with equal authority, A will think that B is going to get the sofa, and B will think that it is the sofa cushions he is to get, and C will think A and B are attending to everything; and the result is that between the first and second dress rehearsals the stage manager will have to get the properties himself. One dependable property man is better than a committee.

THE COSTUMER

The costumer is not appointed by the stage manager. She has probably been at work for several weeks before the stage manager takes charge; but no matter how important her work is nor how well she is doing it, when the period of dress rehearsals begins, the stage manager becomes her boss. He will be the one responsible if the costumes are not in the theater and the changes are not made properly.

THE PROMPTER

So with the prompter. He has been working on the play since the first week of rehearsal; he perhaps knows more about the entire production than anyone except the director; but when the stage manager takes charge the prompter becomes one of the crew.

Perhaps more than a passing word shall be said about the prompter. He has the thankless job of sitting in the wings holding a copy of the play (in which all cuts, changes, and stage directions have been inserted), ready to help the actors with a line, ready to answer the director's inquiry about a piece of stage business. He gets little or no credit for his contribution to the pro-

duction, nevertheless his work is necessary and often very helpful. More than once during rehearsals he is a timesaver.

Not everyone can be a good prompter. Most actors, for example, make poor prompters. A prompter should be even-tempered and patient, should be able to keep his mind on his work, should be completely reliable, should have a good timing sense, and should speak with clean, sharp diction.

The prompter should make (or be given) his prompt-book during early rehearsals, and should be on duty as soon as the actors are fairly familiar with their lines.

A good place for him to be stationed is at the side of the stage, down front, near the electrician and the curtain man, so the three can work together. Another good place for him is on the light bridge above stage in front and just back of the teaser or grand drape (if such a bridge is possible in the theater). From this bridge he has full command of the stage, his voice does not carry out into the auditorium as readily as when he is on the floor level at the side of the stage; and an actor, forgetting a line and glancing upwards towards the bridge, is less noticeable than when he casts a glance towards the wings.

Throughout the weeks of rehearsal, the prompter is the answer box for the director and the actors. During the first rehearsals while the actors are becoming familiar with stage positions and characterizations, and are still reading from their scripts, the prompter may sit down front in the auditorium, familiarizing himself with positions, movements, pauses. He had better, even in these early rehearsals, refrain from talking to anyone and learn to concentrate on what is taking place on the stage. During the last week he should be in his prompter's place.

The question arises as to whether or not the prompter should be present, holding the book, on the nights of the performance. Some directors do not permit him to be present during the actual presentations of the play, others would not ring up the curtain unless he were in his place. Which is right?

The answer depends upon the objective of the performance. If the performance is given for the benefit of the actors, with the

audience of only secondary consideration, then the prompter should not be used. Working without him tends to make the actors more self-reliant, more dependent upon their own resources in any difficulty which may arise. If the performance is given primarily for the audience, then the director, trying in every way to provide for as smooth a performance as possible, has the prompter in his place, and so relieves the actors from the fear of forgetting, and also lessens the possibility of a bungling moment or a bad halt in the presentation.

The scenery captain, electrician, property man, costumer, and prompter are the main assistants to the stage manager. At times he must have supervision over the musicians; and as far as their stage behavior is concerned even the actors must obey him.

Shall he appoint a large crew or a small one? Shall he have an assistant property man and a second assistant? We would say that he should appoint a sufficient number to do the work and no more. A performance is not helped by a stage full of stage hands.

Shall he appoint a doorman and a call boy and proceed with the routine of the play in a professional manner? It probably will not make much difference; if he likes rigmarole and professional formality, there is no harm in letting him have it.

Preparation and Assembly

Sometime before the first dress rehearsal, the stage manager knows what his scenery is to be, how it is put together, where it is to be placed; he knows the properties and when and where they are to be used; he has checked with the costumer and made sure that some actor does not need a special dressing room for a quick change, and that all costumes will be ready for rehearsal. Then, with the help of the director and technical director or electrician, he draws up three plots—a scenery plot, a light plot, and a property plot. These plots are charts or lists which show when and where scenery, lights, and properties will be used.

Also before dress rehearsal he decides upon just how everything is to be managed: since the second act set is small and light,

would it be possible to hinge it, fly it, and drop it inside the first act set? Would it be more convenient to stack the third scene flats at stage right or stage left? Where is the best location for the table necessary for the small hand props? He puzzles over space, over storage, over convenience in moving.

When he has arrived at his decisions, he tries them out. He (with some of the crew) assembles the scenery and properties in their proper places on stage. Perhaps he numbers the scenery pieces with chalk, using red chalk to number the flats in order for act one, blue chalk for act two, and so on. Perhaps, when he has a set of flats in place and has made sure of his sight lines and masking, he marks their position on the floor with paint or chalk. In brief, he organizes in every possible way for convenience and speed in moving the scenery; he prepares the physical stage for dress rehearsals.

Dress Rehearsals

Often just before the first dress rehearsal begins, with actors and stage crew on stage, the director, having said his few words, turns to the stage manager and asks, "Anything you want to say, McGinnis?"

McGinnis does have something to say. He advances to center stage and speaks: "Now, we're going to try to run things through just as smoothly as we can, but things are bound to go wrong tonight. I've assigned all the actors dressing rooms—the numbers are on the bulletin board. Use the rooms assigned to you. When the act is called, I want you to come on stage, not before. When you finish your act, please get off stage quickly and quietly. And please stay off stage between acts while we're changing sets. . . . Prop man, electrician, scenery man—you've all got your plots. If you're not sure by this time about what you're going to do, read your plot. And please don't wait until we're ready to set act two before you look at it. Prompter, I want you to check the playing time of the show—length of the acts and time it takes to change. And the rest of you: no talking to the prompter. She has

enough to do to follow the book. . . . All right, let's make this as near a performance as we can. Clear stage. Places, everybody. . . . Lights all set? . . . Run down the curtain and let's go."

The stage manager, we repeat, is the foreman and authority on what goes on during the dress rehearsals and performance.

It is obvious that in changing sets several things have to be going on at the same time: the scenery must be shifted, properties changed, and light units rearranged. In setting up, the usual order is: big set props on stage down center, scenery set in place, small props on, lighting fixtures adjusted. In striking the set, the electricians work first, then the prop men, then the scenery men. This, of course, is no more than a general order of work; the specific play determines the specific order.

A word may be said about handling or "running" the flats. For wide or heavy flats, two men are necessary; for the smaller flats, one man is sufficient if he has learned how to run them.

To run a flat, the stage hand stands back of the flat, near one edge of it, and facing it. Let us say he is to run the flat off right stage. He grasps the right stage edge of the flat just a little above the level of his head with one of his hands; with the other, he grasps a cross brace. He inclines the top of the flat slightly towards himself, balances it, turns his eyes towards his objective at right stage, and runs the flat along the stage floor rapidly.

It is a simple operation once he gets the hang of it; but when an inexperienced stage hand tries to lift the flat and carry it, or when he tries to balance and push it from the rear, trouble results.

Incidentally, pieces of scenery which already have been used are termed "dead"; those still to be used are "live."

Running the Show

On the night of the performance, the stage manager should be the first one in the theater; and he should not leave the stage during the entire play. The responsibility for the performance is now on his shoulders. If one of the properties is missing, the director will blame him; if a piece of scenery is not set correctly,

it will be his fault; if an actor fails to be in his place in time for an entrance, the stage manager is accused of being asleep.

He has a scenery, light, and property plot of his own. He checks to see that his assistants are making no mistakes. He is the one who probably gives the ushers their instructions and hands them the programs. He asks the doorman to close the door as soon as the curtain is up and allow no one to come in until the first intermission. He (or one of the stage crew whom he has designated call boy) warns the actors how much time they have before the curtain goes up. He gives the orchestra its cue. He calls the actors on stage. He rings up the curtain.

He is the first on stage between acts, perhaps pushing actors out of the way and getting the change started. He checks with the prompter on how long it takes to change. (If it is longer than five minutes, he becomes quite angry, criticizes somebody for being slow, and threatens to call a technical rehearsal to cut down the time. His proudest moment is after the play when he can inform the director: "We set act three in exactly four minutes, thirty seconds!") He has hammer, nails, a long pole for adjusting borders, and other necessary tools ready for an emergency. He sees that the fire extinguishers are in place. He sees that the stage is cleared and everything put in place before he dismisses the crew.

On the night of the performance, the stage manager will be a busy and important person; he should be, in addition, a person with patience and inoffensive authority.

Quick-Changing Devices

The stage manager desires to shift his scenes in a minimum of time. A number of devices for quick changing have been adapted to the amateur stage. What frequently happens, however, is that the theater workers experiment with one of these devices, have a good time and declare it successful, but after a few performances go back to the old way of scene changing.

The device most written and talked about during the past

decades is the revolving stage. It is not exactly a new invention: the Japanese theater was using it in a much simplified form centuries ago.

The revolving stage consists of a large disk which is pivoted at center stage. Such a disk can be built on a stage with a thirty-foot opening for from fifty to seventy-five dollars. It may be constructed of a two-by-four-inch framework, mounted on several casters, and covered with inexpensive flooring or ship-lap. A metal plate with upright metal rod, revolving in a short piece of pipe which is attached to the floor disk, is at center. The disk may be operated by hand.

The great advantage of such a stage, of course, is that the change from one scene to another is only a matter of seconds, for another set is already in place, on the disk back of the first set, and it is simply swung around into place. Its disadvantages are that it limits the depth, width, and generally the height of the sets; it raises the stage floor at least six inches and makes the footlights useless; and it limits the types of play which can be played.

Much has also been written about the wagon stage. A large platform, on casters, can be built to carry an entire set; or smaller platforms may carry units which are quickly wheeled into place. Again, the advantage is quickness of change; but for most amateur theaters the wagon stage is impracticable because a great amount of side or rear space is necessary for setting and storing the wagons.

For a jackknife stage, two low platforms on swivel casters are constructed. The length of the platform wagons is the width of the playing space of the scene; the depth is the depth of the playing space. The wagons are set, one on each side of the stage, facing center. One corner of each, the instage corner just at the edge of the tormentor, is pivoted in the manner we have suggested for the revolving stage. The wagon on one side may then be swung downstage in an arc until it rests in playing position between the tormentors. Then it may be swung back, and the second wagon, containing its set, moved into playing position. It is to be remembered that, for the operation of jackknife stages, there must be an unencumbered space at either side of the stage sufficient to take

care of the playing depth of the scene which is set on the wagon.

The advantage and disadvantages of the jackknife stage are about the same as for the wagon stage.

These stages upon a stage have proved to be more an interesting novelty than a permanent addition to our amateur theaters. It is generally possible with our ordinary stage and our ordinary method of scenery construction (if we have a fly loft and moderate amount of side space) to devise some satisfactory method for quick changing.

For example, a set with side walls, twelve feet long and twelve feet high, and a back wall of twenty-four feet, might be constructed of 1" x 2" lumber in four flats, each twelve by twelve feet. The right wall and the right half of the back wall could be hinged to fold inward. The left wall and the left half of the back wall could be similarly hinged. The two upstage corners are put in position, the flats spread fanwise and lashed to the tormentor or return edge, and at center back. Four men should be able to set up such a set in less than a minute's time.

When quick changes are required, attention is again called to the unit set. It offers many possibilities.

32

BUSINESS AND PUBLICITY

The Budget

A PRODUCTION should be built on a budget. An estimate of how many tickets will be sold, of how much can be made on program advertising, and of money from all other sources of income should be made, and the production expenditures budgeted accordingly. A stated amount should be allotted to the technician, the costumer, the electrician, the publicity department. It may seem superfluous to suggest that efficient business management is necessary for the successful production of plays, but lack of budgeting, lack of a reasonable amount of thought about what a production will cost and how it is to be paid for, is so common that it is apparent that some school groups still need to have their attention called to it.

Who shall handle the budget is a matter for the individual group to determine. In some instances, the business office of the school takes charge; in others, the director himself handles the funds; in still others, a student or a fellow teacher is appointed to the task. The important point is that there should be a responsible business manager who shall keep a close check on all expenditures.

Publicity

The public will not know that our play is to be given unless we tell them of it; they will not have their interest aroused to the point where they want to see our play unless we arouse it. A play must be publicized.

There is good publicity and bad. Flamboyant advertising, ridiculous exaggeration about an "all star cast," promises to give what cannot be given and what the producers have no intention of giving, are all bad forms of publicity. They are bad because they disappoint an audience and lead to loss of confidence in the integ-

THE DARROW PLAYERS
PRESENT

AN ALL STAR CAST
IN

A COMEDY IN 3 ACTS
BY   G.B SHAW

"CANDIDA"

UNDER THE DIRECTION
OF GEORGE S HUNTER

HOLLIS THEATER
THREE NIGHTS
NOV 2,3,4

BOX OFFICE OPEN FOR
RESERVATIONS OCT 28

SINGLE ADMISSION 50¢

CURTAIN RISES AT 8.15 SHARP

A BAD WINDOW CARD

THE DARROW COLLEGE PLAYERS
SEASON OF PLAYS   1942-'43

THE DARROW PLAYERS PRESENT

CANDIDA
A COMEDY BY G B SHAW

HOLLIS THEATER
NOVEMBER 2, 3, 4.

RESERVATIONS OCT 28 . ACTIVITY
TICKETS ADMIT .. SINGLE ADMISSION 50¢
CURTAIN AT 8 15 . ...

A BETTER WINDOW CARD

rity of the theater organization. Beyond this, they are downright immoral.

A form of publicity almost as undesirable as extravagant advertising is cheap publicity. Resorting to cheap methods of publicizing a play tends to cheapen the entire production.

School and college plays and non-professional plays in general should be publicized with a certain respect for the truth and with a becoming modesty. Nine times out of ten the producing organization will gain rather than lose customers by such a policy.

How, definitely, should a play be advertised? What sort of publicity should be used?

Placards and window cards are recommended if they are distinct or novel in the design, color, or type used in the card. A

window card which looks like every other card that has appeared during the school year will not attract much attention. Let a word or a phrase stand out on the card to catch the eye. It may be the title of the play or a word in the title; it may be the word "comedy" or "theater," or the name of the author if he is well known. The necessary information about the time and place of the play . should be given in the fewest possible words.

Ask the printer to draw up a design for the card or compose one yourself; if nothing is said about design, color, or style of type, the card most likely will have no distinction. When an attractive design is worked out, it is well to keep it for a series of cards so that the public will come to associate the design with your plays.

The cards should not be put up too early. If the tickets are to go on sale Thursday for a performance the next Monday, the cards should be posted no earlier than the Monday before the performance.

Photographs, if they are large enough to be seen easily, are good publicity. Better than portraits of the actors are photographs of the actors in character make-up. People will always stop to look at pictures of their friends, schoolmates, and fellow citizens in costume and make-up.

Handbills or "dodgers" fall in the doubtful class. They clutter up the street or campus and make certain people angry. They are used so frequently for cheap advertising that they may do as much harm as good. And handbills are seldom read carefully anyway.

A larger poster, in color, posted outside the ticket office or near the theater door on the day tickets go on sale is usually profitable publicity. As with window cards, the poster should contain few words rather than many.

The newspaper is still a most effective medium for play publicity. However, we must remember when approaching a reporter or a newspaper office that what we are really asking for is free advertising; and we must keep in mind that a newspaper prints news. What, we should ask ourselves, have we to offer which

will make news? Names are generally news; things happening are news. Our publicity stories should, then, be news stories.

Let us say that we may expect our local paper to print five publicity-news stories. Our first story can be an announcement of the play, the kind it is, where it is to be given, when, and by whom. Such an announcement, printed once, is news. Our second story may be on the cast, giving their names, for, as we have said, names are news. Our third may be a story on the progress of the production—something about the scenery, ticket sales, costumes—again using names whenever possible. Fourth, we may run an interesting story on some incident connected with rehearsals. No play was ever produced in which something humorous or exciting or near tragic did not happen, some incident which can be turned into a good story: the difficulty in getting permission to play the play, the accident when the ladder toppled and the paint bucket slipped and fell on Betty Lou Saunder's head, the withdrawal of Henry McCannon from the cast because of his father's sudden illness, the rag doll which is being used as a prop for the baby in the third act. And lastly, a story can be written on the plot and characters—added to the news of how ticket sales and dress rehearsals are progressing.

Think out a publicity plan for the two or three weeks preceding the show. Then write short stories rather than long ones. Short stories have greater selling value than long ones, and the editor of the paper will accept them with much better grace.

The first story may be printed perhaps three weeks before the date of the performance. Then nothing need appear about the play for a week or ten days. After that the stories can follow one another every second or third day.

Tickets

Shall the tickets be reserved or not reserved? No general answer can be made. Reserved tickets are more troublesome, cost more to print, and people are accustomed to going to motion picture theaters where in most instances there are no reserved seats.

These facts argue against the use of reserved tickets. On the other hand, people like the idea of reserved seats; they like the idea of selecting a seat, of knowing where they are going to sit; they like the thought of not having to hurry to the theater early on the night of the performance in order to secure a good seat. These things are especially true of the adult members of the audience.

Reserved seats are like dressing for dinner: dressing up is a little more trouble, but it does set one up and it makes the dinner seem a bit more important.

Whoever is pressed into service as ticket seller ought, first of all, to be gracious and courteous. Service stations have long shown us that courtesy pays. Second, the ticket seller should be very, very careful not to make mistakes. If a mistake is made, the public accepts without question that it is the ticket seller's fault. When a person arrives at the door of the theater and finds that he has been given a ticket for the wrong night, or that he has two seats which are not together, or that the seats are in Row R instead of Row E which he distinctly remembers asking for, the ticket seller has put that member of the audience in a fine mood to dislike the play.

Lastly, the ushers should know the seating arrangement of the auditorium; there should be enough ushers so that the audience will not have to stand for minutes at the door; and the ushers should show the spectators to their seats courteously.

These people: ticket sellers, ushers, doorman, form the only personal contact many members of the audience have with those who are putting on the play; personal contact is important; these people can contribute their share in making the audience like the play.

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A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE ACTED PLAY

MOST teachers and directors will read the title of this chapter and declare that there is no adequate substitute for the acted play—and perhaps they are right; but occasionally, because of shortness of time, lack of funds, poor staging conditions, or for some other reason, a dramatic program is desirable, but an acted play is out of the question. Can any suggestion be offered for such a situation? One suggestion we might offer is: Try a staged reading of a play.

The Staged Reading

By a staged reading we have in mind a play which is cut to reading length, is cast, and studied; but, instead of being memorized, it is read by the actors from the stage. It is a presentation which does not rely upon action or environment but is given to the audience through the dialogue as read by the actors and through the comments of a narrator.

Its disadvantage is that the entire visual element of the acted play is absent: it must depend upon the imagination of the audience to see what is not taking place. Its great advantages are found in the modest expenditures of time and money. A staged reading may be rehearsed for presentation in one week; the reading royalty for a fifty-dollar royalty play is about ten dollars, for a twenty-five-dollar royalty play, five dollars.

PREPARING THE READING SCRIPT

The play chosen for a staged reading must be chosen for its straightforward story plot, its limited number of characters, its

dependence upon dialogue rather than upon complicated action and stage effects. On the other hand, it need not be a play of only one set: the scene of action may change several times during the reading without confusion; it need not be a play of simple settings since they are described and not seen; it need not be a modern play since costumes are imagined and not worn.

The acting script should not be used until two important changes are made in it. The first change consists of cutting the play to a reading time of an hour or an hour and a quarter. At times characters can be eliminated without great harm to the main story of the play; this would be true of Ardrey's *Thunder Rock* from which the Chinaman and the Relief Man could be eliminated. Sometimes a character part that adds little more than humor or local color, or one which is put in the play to pad out a scene or to make the passage of time more logical, may be cut to much smaller proportions. In Benn Levy's *Mrs. Moonlight* the lines of Willie Ragg may be cut mercilessly, especially in the third act. Again, short scenes may be eliminated entirely and the substance of the scene described briefly by the narrator after the fashion of the radio narrator.

What we are doing, in fact, is preparing a script which is much nearer the form and length of a radio play than a stage play. And, as in a radio play, our commentator or narrator becomes important in the presentation.

The creation of the narrator is our second change in the script. This character sets the stage and creates the atmosphere for the audience; he announces the entrances and exits; he describes any necessary piece of stage movement or business which, it is presumed, is transpiring.

The narrator's part has to be written into the script. Sometimes the play script contains much material, in proper literary form, in the introductions and stage directions, which can be used (with careful additions, omissions, and shifting about) as the part of the narrator. Such would be the case in Barrie's *Mary Rose* and in Levy's *Mrs. Moonlight*. At other times, when the stage directions are brief and prosaic, we have to try our hand at original

literary writing; we have to do our best to compose vivid and appropriate descriptions which establish the mood and carry the audience along with the emotional changes and progress of the play. Noel Coward's *Hay Fever* would require such additional writing.

When our play has been cut and our narrator's part written in, we are ready to select our readers. Voice is extremely important now, and readers are chosen largely on flexibility of voice and on a vocal quality which is appropriate to the character. Next in importance to voice is experience; actors with stage experience make better readers than do those with no stage experience. And, of all our readers, we will choose our narrator with the greatest care. He will have no character to interpret, but he should have a naturally attractive personality and a pleasant, flexible voice; and he should be able to take his audience easily and surely from scene to scene and from one mood to the other.

REHEARSING THE READING

The scripts we have made ready should not be too large and bulky. If the script has been typewritten, the sheets should be cut in half and bound by acts or scenes. If possible, the cuttings should be made in the acting versions and the printed playbooks used.

The actors sit behind and at the two sides of a long, narrow table. A word or two may be written on the subject of our reading table. It is not very expensive to construct three tables, each two feet wide, five feet long, and thirty inches high. Across the front of each of these tables a dark cloth, which hangs in folds to the floor, is tacked. This cloth hides the feet and legs of the readers from the eyes of the audience. If we have three small tables, as suggested, then if only four characters read in the act it is necessary to have only one table on the stage; when six read, a second table is added; when eight or more appear in the act, the three tables are put in place, end to end.

The scenes of each act suggest a logical arrangement of the readers, both in respect to their location behind or at the sides of the table, and in respect to their relation to one another. Those

having long dialogues with each other should be seated close together; those with short or less important dialogues should be seated near the ends or at the sides.

When the act begins, all the actors who read in the act are seated in chairs at the table. It is a good plan to place these chairs some little distance away from the table, so that the actors may sit with their eyes lowered, following their books which are held in their laps and out of sight of the audience. When a character's entrance is announced, the actor rises and reads; when his exit is announced, the actor seats himself and lowers his eyes as before the entrance. Experience has shown that having the actors rise to read is a better plan than keeping them seated throughout the reading; and holding the books so that the pages may be turned without the audience seeing the flutter of the pages is less distracting than when the books are held on the table.

The narrator stands at a taller reading table which is located either on a low platform at rear stage, or near the front of the stage at one side.

During the first several rehearsals, neither the arrangement at the table nor the routine of rising and sitting is important. Characterization and interpretation through reading must first demand attention. The last two rehearsals, however, should follow the pattern of the performance.

Some Further Suggestions

Every director is free to stage his reading as his imagination prompts him; but for the beginner several further suggestions may help in answering questions which will arise.

He will probably find that a plain curtain set lighted dimly from his general illumination units, and with stronger specific illumination on his table and narrator's stand is most satisfactory. We would warn against using colored lights, lighting tricks, or any effects which take away from the simplicity, informality, and untheatricality of the performance.

He will probably find that he will want to use his front curtain for act and scene divisions. Its use will permit him to enlarge

or contract his table space, give his actors a moment of relaxation, and allow them to change seating positions for the following scene. The intermission periods should, perhaps, be no more than two minutes in length.

He may experiment with having his actor turn slightly—though only slightly—towards the character whom he is addressing; and with having his narrator face the audience during the narrative parts, then turn to the actor on the actor's entrance line, thus leading the audience back into the action of the play. However, only a minimum of movement, gesture, and facial expression is necessary; too much will make the presentation neither a simple reading nor an acted play, and the audience may grow puzzled over what is taking place.

When he gives his first staged reading, the director may find it helpful to make a brief explanatory speech to the audience, telling them something of the nature of the presentation—for the audience, perhaps, will be unfamiliar with this type of performance.

What will be the reaction to the reading? When it is over, he will probably find that some of his audience are disappointed in it; but he will be happily surprised to find that others are quite enthusiastic, and are willing to declare that they found more pleasure in visualizing in their imaginations what was suggested by the narrator than they would have found in an actual staging of the play by amateurs.

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A LIST OF BOOKS ON THE ACTED PLAY

THE FOLLOWING list of books represents only a fraction of those in print on the different phases of production of the acted play. Some are elementary, others advanced; some treat their subject from the professional standpoint, others from the standpoint of the amateur theater. They should suggest to the student or beginning teacher-director where he may go for more detailed information on many of the subjects discussed simply and briefly in this book.

ORGANIZATION

> Alexander Dean: *Little Theatre Organization and Management.* D. Appleton-Century Co., 1926.
> Stanford E. Stanton: *Theatre Management.* D. Appleton-Century Co., 1929.

GENERAL PRODUCTION

> H. C. Heffner, Samuel Selden, and H. D. Sellman: *Modern Theatre Practice.* Covers directing, scenery, lighting, and costume in a practical way. F. S. Crofts & Co., Second Edition, 1939.
> John Dolman: *The Art of Play Production.* Comprehensive and recommended. Harper & Brothers, 1928.
> John Gassner: *Producing the Play.* Both aesthetic and practical; viewpoint is often that of the professional stage. The Dryden Press, 1941.
> A. M. Drummond: *A Manual of Play Production.* A handbook. Cornell University Press, 1924.

Bernard Hewitt: *Art and Craft of Play Production.* Theory and process of production. J. B. Lippincott Company, 1940.

DIRECTION AND TEACHING

Gilmor Brown and Alice Garwood: *General Principles of Play Direction.* Brief but clear. Samuel French, 1936.

Allen Crafton: *Play Directing.* Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1938.

Alexander Dean: *Fundamentals of Play Directing.* Theory and technique of directing. Farrar & Rinehart, 1941.

Miriam A. Franklin: *Rehearsal.* Very useful to the teacher. Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1942.

Samuel J. Hume and Lois M. Foster: *Theatre and School.* Samuel French, 1932.

Roy Mitchell: *The School Theatre.* Coward-McCann, 1925.

Katherine Anne Ommanney: *The Stage and the School.* Harper & Brothers, 1932.   •

Samuel Selden: *The Stage in Action.* F. S. Crofts & Co., 1941.

Stark Young: *Theatre Practice.* Chapter on the art of directing. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926.

ACTING

Madame Eva Alberti: *A Handbook of Acting.* Based on pantomime. Samuel French, 1932.

Richard Boleslavsky: *Acting: The First Six Lessons.* Based on the Stanislavsky method of acting. Theatre Arts, 1933.

Louis Calvert: *Problems of the Actor.* Characterization, art of doing nothing, feeling the emotions, making the audience laugh, etc., by a professional actor. Henry Holt and Company, 1918.

E. B. Colvin: *Face the Footlights.* Diction, characterization, poise, carriage, bodily acting. Whittlesey House, 1940.

Aristide D'Angelo: *The Actor Creates.* Samuel French, 1939.

John Dolman: *The Art of Play Production.* Theories of acting, stage movement, voice, diction. Harper & Brothers, 1928.

Bernard Hewitt: *Art and Craft of Play Production.* One chapter on acting. J. B. Lippincott Company, 1940..

Lorenz Kjerbühl-Peterson: *The Psychology of Acting.* A sys-

tem which does not agree with Stanislavsky's. Expression Co., 1935.

C. Lowell Lees: *A Primer of Acting*. Observation and analysis; preparation and practice. Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1940.

Samuel Selden: *A Player's Handbook*. F. S. Crofts & Co., 1934.

Samuel Selden: *The Stage in Action*. F. S. Crofts & Co., 1941.

Constantin Stanislavsky: *The Actor Prepares*. The most famous modern book on acting; an exposition of the Moscow Art Theatre system. Theatre Arts, 1936.

Stark Young: *Theatre Practice*. Chapters I and II—movement, speed, tempo. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926.

MAKE-UP

John F. Baird: *Make-up*. Samuel French, 1930.

Helena Chalmers: *The Art of Make-up*. D. Appleton-Century Co., 1925.

Richard Corson: *Stage Makeup*. F. S. Crofts & Co., 1942.

Rudolph G. Liszt: *The Last Word in Make-up*. Dramatists Play Service, 1942.

Serge Strenkovsky: *The Art of Make-up*. The most thorough of the books. E. P. Dutton & Company, 1937.

SCENERY DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION, PAINTING

Harold Burris-Meyer and Edward C. Cole: *Scenery for the Stage*. Construction, materials, painting, visual effects; highly recommended. Little, Brown & Co., 1938.

John Gassner: *Producing the Play*. Section on design; also "The new scene technician's handbook." The Dryden Press, 1941.

Mordecai Gorelik: *New Theatres for Old*. Samuel French, 1940.

Harold Helvenston: *Scenery: A Manual of Stage Design*. Stanford University Press, 1931.

A. E. Krows: *Equipment for Stage Production*. Brief but useful. D. Appleton-Century Co., 1928.

Henning Nelms: *A Primer of Stagecraft*. Dramatists Play Service, 1941.

Samuel Selden and Hunton D. Sellman: *Stage Scenery and*

Lighting. Forms of scenery, construction, painting; highly recommended. F. S. Crofts & Co., 1936.

Lee Simonson: *The Stage is Set.* Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932.

Milton Smith: *The Equipment of the School Theatre.* Columbia University Press, 1930.

LIGHTING

Theodore Fuchs: *Stage Lighting.* Comprehensive and useful. Little, Brown & Co., 1929.

Theodore Fuchs: *Home Built Lighting Equipment.* Samuel French, 1939.

Jack Stuart Knapp: *Lighting the Stage with Homemade Lighting Equipment.* Walter H. Baker Co., 1933.

Stanley R. McCandless: *A Method of Lighting the Stage.* Theatre Arts, 1932.

Henning Nelms: *Lighting the Amateur Stage.* Theatre Arts, 1931.

A. L. Powell and A. Rodgers: *Lighting for the Non-Professional Stage Production.* Kreiger Publications, 1931.

Samuel Selden and Hunton D. Sellman: *Stage Scenery and Lighting.* Meaning of light, equipment, color, lighting practice; recommended. F. S. Crofts & Co., 1936.

COSTUME

Lucy Barton: *Historic Costumes for the Stage.* Walter H. Baker Co., 1935.

Edith Dabney and C. M. Wise: *A Book of Dramatic Costume.* F. S. Crofts & Co., 1930.

Elizabeth Gage: *A Study of Costume.* Cutting patterns, materials, accessories. Charles Scribner's Sons.

Elizabeth B. Grimball and Rhea Wells: *Costuming a Play.* A practical manual. D. Appleton-Century Co., 1925.

Theodore Komisarjevsky: *The Costume of the Theatre.* Theory and history. Henry Holt and Company, 1932.

Katherine Morris Lester: *Historic Costume.* Costume historically treated. Manual Arts Press, Peoria, Ill., 1925.

Dorothy Lynne Saunders: *Costuming the Amateur Show.* Materials, foundation designs. Samuel French, 1937.

Fairfax Proudfit Walkup: *Dressing the Part.* History of costume for the stage from Egypt to the twentieth century. F. S. Crofts & Co., 1938.

Agnes Brooks Young: *Stage Costuming.* The Macmillan Company, 1927.

EFFECTS

Harold Burris-Meyer and Edward C. Cole: *Scenery for the Stage.* A section is devoted to effects. Little, Brown & Co., 1938.

A. E. Krows: *Equipment for Stage Production.* Chapter 14. D. Appleton-Century Co., 1928.

Frank Napier: *Noises Off: A Handbook of Sound Effects.* Miller (London), 1936.

Richard B. Whorf and Roger Wheeler: *Runnin' the Show.* Walter H. Baker Co., 1930.

STAGE ORGANIZATION

William P. Halstead: *Stage Management for the Amateur Theatre.* F. S. Crofts & Co., 1937.

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